

March-April 2022

Akhand Jyoti

The Light Divine



Akhand Jyoti is not merely a magazine. It is an embodiment of my soul. - Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya

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The Scientific Aspect of
Gayatri Mantra



The thirtieth Jatthedar of Akal Takhta Sahib, Gyani Harpreet Singh Ji, visited Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidyalyaya and had a meeting with Dr. Chinmay Pandya, Pro-Chancellor of DSVV.

|| Om bhūrbhuvāḥ svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt ||
(May Almighty illuminate our intellect and inspire us towards the righteous path)

- Rigveda 3/62/10; Samveda 13/4/3, Yajurveda 3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/3



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Amrit Chintan

Our Thoughts are the Hidden Rulers of Our Lives

The quality of one's mental inscriptions depends upon what kind of thoughts dominate one's thinking most often. An empty mind is said to be a devil's workshop, whereas a mind engaged in creative work and righteous, constructive thinking is sure to sharpen, brighten and expand its capabilities.

If one ponders this fact, then his mental evolution is in his hands. Short temperedness enhances anger and harmful excitement. Worries, tensions, gloom, despair, and similar negative instincts weaken the mind further. So one should not reminisce untoward memories of the past or indulge in vulgar, erotic, revengeful, depressing, or arbitrary fanciful imaginations.

Positive, optimistic, and reasoned thinking educes new joy and energy in the mind and motivates it for constructive actions. This is also the key to sharpening the intellect. Focusing the mind on a single-pointed objective augments its corresponding skills and potentials. This is how one becomes an expert in a specific skill or field of knowledge. In short, our thoughts are the hidden rulers of our lives.

- Puja Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya



The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra. - Jimmy Johnson



AKHAND JYOTI

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If you keep rephrasing the question, it gradually becomes the answer. - Robert Brault



Pragya Sansthan: The Centers of Mass Awakening

Swami Vivekananda once said, 'Each nation has a main current in life; In India, it is religion. Religion is the language of this country, the symbol of all its movements.' These words of Swami Vivekananda are true in letter and spirit. We can clearly feel the flow of faith-filled consciousness in India. According to the census of 2001, there were twenty lakhs temples in India. This number would have certainly increased today. Considering this aspect, several Pragya Sansthan were established by our Mission. Many of them are more than forty years old. In this 51st anniversary of Shantikunj, let us contemplate the purpose of establishing them in the present context.

Pujya Gurudev started establishing the Pragya Sansthan from the Vasant Panchami Day of 1979 to accomplish the spiritual upliftment of the masses through religion. That was the 'Silver Jubilee Year' of launching 'Yug Nirman Yojana' (literally meaning the plan for ushering of a new era). Considering the topical need of awakening the empathetic emotions in human beings, it was decided first to establish 24 and later on 2400 Pragya Sansthan like

Gayatri Shaktipeeths, Pragyapeeths, etc. in India and abroad.

The purpose of establishing these Sansthan was to disseminate the essence and teachings inherent in the Gayatri Mantra and refine the personalities of the masses through this medium. Pujya Gurudev and Vandaniya Mataji had already done the homework for this task in the form of conducting several programs of Yagya all over the country and observed their beneficial effects in the form of refinement of personalities of lakhs of participants. A group of dedicated volunteers, who had uplifted themselves through Prana Pratyavartan and Sanjeevani Sadhana Satras, was already with them. The Pravrajya Abhiyan to spread the consciousness of Gayatri in society had also achieved speed.

Years ago, Shankaracharya established four Dhams and did spiritual churning of India to spread the light of spiritual knowledge among the masses. While establishing the Pragya Sansthan, a similar line of thought and sentiments existed in Pujya Gurudev's heart. That is why he wrote – 'I never desired that huge temples should be constructed unnecessarily. Wherever the Pragya Sansthan have been established, they should start constructive activities for making the religion progressive and beneficial to society. Even if such activities are started in the already existing temples, I will consider them new Sansthan.'

What could be more revolutionary and timely thinking that wherever there were resources and emotional involvement of the masses, a new Shaktipeeth could be made. However, if the older temples could be renovated and life was infused



If you have to do it every day, for God's sake, learn to do it well. - Mignon McLaughlin



into them, the task of mass awakening could be easily achieved. In doing so, justice would also be done to the objective with which Gayatri Pariwar was established.

The resolves of Incarnated great men are manifested immediately. Pujya Gurudev started speaking about Pragya Sansthans in 1979, and within no time, their number reached hundreds. The resolve of Pujya Gurudev began to expand like a Matsyavatara. The reminiscences of many volunteers who became the means for the development of Pragya Sansthans are such that the listeners would be astonished. The economic condition of such volunteers was such that they did not possess enough resources for constructing their own homes. But, it was amazing how and from where they could collect lakhs of rupees for this purpose, and this divine development of Sansthans was made possible.

It was asked to install an idol of Mother Gayatri as a center of faith and construct Yagyashala, Satsang hall, a counter for Misson's literature, a residential suite for the Parivrajaka, etc. in the Pragya Sansthan's premises. This godly endeavor caught the speed, and, in no time, thousands of Shaktipeeths were constructed. Through these Pragya Sansthans, many such energetic and dedicated volunteers emerged who could transform the lives of millions of people.

When Pujya Gurudev visited these Sansthans for their inauguration and consecration ceremony of the idols, he made it very clear that these were not mere temples but should serve as the centers of mass awakening. He also warned that no men/women desirous of earning popularity should join these Sansthans; otherwise, the purpose for which they are made would not be served.

The purpose of establishing the idol of Mother Gayatri was to awaken faith in the divine of the visitors to these Sansthans and make them realize the significance of righteous wisdom. The Yagyashala served as a medium for acquainting the visitors about the scientific aspect of Yagya. The main aim of Pragya Sansthans was to serve as the centers of awakening the consciousness of the masses through Yug Sangeet (inspiring music), imparting righteous impressions through the rituals of Sanskaras, establishing Pragya Mandals, Mahila Mandals, Yuva Mandals, etc. Undertaking constructive activities, such as tree plantation, women's awakening, adult education, Bal Sanskara Shalas, that are beneficial to society, was also the objective of these Sansthans.

In today's parlance, it is essential that the aim with which these Pragya Sansthans were established should be kept intact. The guidance given by Pujya Gurudev in this regard – 'these are not the temples, but the centers of mass awakening and social upliftment' - should always be kept in mind.

Pranav Pandya

(Pranav Pandya)



Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.

- Robert Louis Stevenson



Deciphering the Science of Emotions

The transition of the new millennium took place with simultaneous paradigm shifts in several spheres of life. Prominent among these is the shift in outlook towards success and development, which was confined to the materialistic domain and intellectualism until recently. Now, the 'management' of resources is given greater importance than a mere generation or mobilization of resources. The definition of 'resources' too has widened and embraced 'human resources, or more specifically 'healthy human resources' in its fold. The concept of health has expanded beyond the human body, and now incorporated in it is the essential factor of mental well-being. With the realization of the crucial role of the mind beyond intellectual sharpness, understanding and managing emotions have also become significantly important.

So much so that investigations in the 'science' of emotions have become an active area of research in psychology and neurobiology. Not only that, in place of intelligence quotient (IQ), 'emotional intelligence' and hence the emotional quotient (EQ) has now

become a yardstick of selection at many important positions of high responsibility, decision-making, and management.

It is indeed remarkable to note that advancements of neurobiology and neurosciences, in general, have helped in elucidation or at least provided hypotheses and models for the understanding of the 'anatomy,' 'physiology,' and 'chemistry' of emotions to a great extent. However, the discoveries of new neurochemicals and supporting results of hypotheses of their possible interrelations in different brain functions are growing so rapidly that it is difficult to judge which of these findings is confirmed or definite and will remain so in the future. Moreover, all these pertain only to the 'functional expression' or manifestation of emotions. It should be noted here that emotions are internal feelings; they are experienced in mind and not in the brain. The brain only manifests (via bioelectrical impulses and neurochemical secretions) the mental state of their occurrence. As we all know, the brain is an organ of the physical body, whereas the mind is a component of the subtle body. Every impulse, every state, every action of the mind, be that at the conscious, subconscious, or unconscious level, affects the activities of the brain system.

As we all know, the ability or function of "feeling" is a natural sign of life. Every living being has the inherent capacity to feel. The tiny creatures or the so-called lower organisms, including plants and trees, feel only certain impulses or signals of Nature (e.g., feeling the change in weather, feeling hungry, etc.) through specific sensors in their bodies. Apart from having sensors of this kind, the



Whatever you are, be a good one. - Abraham Lincoln



more evolved animals also have feelings which are like ‘manifested emotions’ — expressed in specific physical expressions or visible actions, e.g., crying of a pet dog when it is separated from its affectionate master. A human being, the most evolved creature on earth, is endowed with additional and more developed faculties of consciousness-force. Apart from having the intellectual potential to think and reason, the mental domain of a human being also possesses an inner source of sensitivity/sentiments, deeper emotions, and enlightenment.

Psychologists define emotion as the language of a person’s mental state of being, normally based on or tied to the person’s internal (psychological or physical) and external (social) sensory feeling. More precisely, as per the widely accepted definition among the modern psychologists, “emotion,” in its most general sense, is a complex psychophysical process that arises spontaneously, rather than through conscious effort, and evokes either a positive or negative psychological response and physical expressions, often involuntary, related to feelings, perceptions or beliefs about elements, objects or relations between them, in reality, or the imagination.

Though comprehensive from the modern psychological point of view, this perception of emotion also deals mainly with ‘behavioral expression’ or ‘experience’ emotions. Interestingly, the theorists who propagate this perception claim that this definition differentiates ‘emotion’ from ‘feeling.’ But, they do not elaborate upon how or why? Anyway, we need not get trapped in this debate here. Rather, we should focus on the basic questions of the origin and nature of emotions and the possibilities of their control and evolution.

While neurobiological research is confined to experimental observations and hence on physiological and/or physico-chemical activities of the brain and the nervous system, the psychological approach also has its limitations when

it comes to an understanding and analyzing emotions in human beings. This is because the subject matter of psychology emanates and largely revolves around behavioral studies and treatment of disorders of mind vis-à-vis normal (socially acceptable) behavior of individuals. It thus lacks understanding of the multiple dimensions of the mind and its deeper cores which certainly cannot be neglected in human beings.

The science of consciousness and spirituality may lend the support necessary to compensate the limitations of neurosciences (including human psychology), as it encompasses manifested as well as extrasensory or sublime realms of Consciousness-Force beyond the space-time constraints. Ancient texts on scientific spirituality, the Upanishads, for example, accept the deterministic existence of the mind-body system and the role of manifested Nature but emphasize the continuity of life and its impact on mental makeup and intrinsic character. At the same time, these texts also signify the creative freedom of spirit for transcendence and unbounded evolution.

The Upanishads and other ancient Indian texts of the science of consciousness take into account



It’s better to fight for something than against something. - Author Unknown



the intellect and the conscious, subconscious as well as the unconscious and superconscious horizons of the mind. The origin, existence, and nature of expression and perception of thoughts and emotions (be those physico-chemically manifested experiences, inner feelings, or deeper sentiments) are attributed to the sublime impressions inscribed in the unconscious mind.

These and related texts of Indian Philosophy and Spirituality thus explain, without any ambiguity or obscurity, the existence and nature of thoughts, emotions, conscience, and other basic characteristics of our beings and give the methods of their control and evolution.

The subject matter of psychology deals with the mind. By and large, the approach of this 'modern science of the mind' revolves around studying the behavioral manifestation of the states, experiences, and 'reactions' of the mind. This makes it more of social science than the science of mind. This approach sounds superficial and incomplete regarding the sublime existence and extrasensory dimensions of the human mind.

Considering that emotions and thoughts are the characteristics of our

being, it is important and interesting to explore their science more deeply in the light of a holistic and in-depth approach.

The ancient Indian science, being derived from and predominantly focused on the consciousness-force rather than the visible or material-based manifestation of the world, takes a more comprehensive approach. Exposition and cognition of thoughts and emotions, be those physico-chemically or physiologically manifested experiences, inner feelings, or deeper sentiments, are explored here without any structured premises, religious or scientific theories, or hypotheses. The 'constituents,' 'structure,' and 'functions' of the human mind are deciphered and analyzed here more thoroughly and precisely as a material substance in a physical or (bio)chemical laboratory.

The Upanishads and other Indian texts of the Vedantic Philosophy and Scientific Spirituality describe that the eternal, omnipresent consciousness-force (*Brahm*) brings the expression of Nature in existence by manifestation of the five basic elements (*panch tattvas*) – fire, earth, water, air, and sky - with the three basic tendencies (*triguṇa*) — *sat*, *raj* and *tam*. Diverse combinations of the basic elements and the *triguṇa* account for the infinite diversity of expression and perception of the consciousness-force in living forms and creations of matter in immense varieties. While the inanimate components (matter or physically existing substances – including the human body) of Nature are created by the *tam-guṇa* of the *panch tattvas*, the *chetan* forms – e.g., the subtle body (that includes mind and intellect) of a person — are brought into existence with *raj* and/or *sat guṇas* of the five basic elements.

The Indian science of consciousness considers the conscious, subconscious, unconscious, and superconscious realms of mind and the other components (including intellect) of the



The day will happen whether or not you get up. - John Ciardi



subtle and causal bodies. The origin, existence, and innate nature of a person's intrinsic tendencies, emotions, and thoughts are mainly attributed to the sublime impressions (*sanskāras*) inscribed in his/her unconscious mind (*chitta*) since earlier lives. The influence of the exposure, training, and ambiance of this life, particularly the impact of present circumstances, is certainly important, but to what extent and how these would affect the nature of one's emotions and thoughts primarily depend upon one's characteristic *sanskāras*.

As emotions lie at the root of our moods and influence our thoughts and actions, we also need to control and positively channel our feelings. Refinement of personality also depends upon a healthy and developed state of the emotional makeup. Emotions originate in the inner nucleus of the mind compared to the domain of intellect. Therefore, emotions are subtler than thoughts and are more intensely linked with the *sanskāras*.

As Indian science of spirituality emphasizes purification of the *chitta* — the core of *sanskāras*, it provides a holistic approach to thought management and emotional intelligence. Personality

development and strength, concentration and brilliance of mind, positive thinking, righteous decision-making, and emotional peace and blissfulness are natural gifts of spiritual elevation.

Yoga being an experimental branch of the Indian science of spirituality, renders practical direction and support in this regard. In fact, the very definition of yoga is *chitta vṛatti nirodhaḥ* — absolute control over the intrinsic tendencies of *chitta*. Adoption of the yoga disciplines of *yama*, *niyama*, and yoga exercises of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* together with spiritual practices of mental recitation of the Gayatri Mantra, meditation, mantra-japa, and *swādhyāya* — *satsang* is a universally applicable and definite mode of physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual well-being and evolution.

The Yogic sages say that all the pain of human life is caused by words, as is all the joy. We create words to define our experience, and those words bring attendant emotions that jerk us around like dogs on a leash. We get seduced by our own mantras (I'm a failure... I'm lonely... I'm a failure... I'm lonely...), and we become monuments to them. To stop talking for a while, then, is to attempt to strip away the power of words, stop choking ourselves with words, and liberate ourselves from our suffocating mantras.

- Elizabeth Gilbert



One should always play fair when one has the winning cards. - Oscar Wilde



Problems Casting Shadows on India's Future Need an Immediate Solution

In the saga of human progress, it is essential to periodically assess the stages crossed and reflect on whether the chosen path of progress is leading us to satisfactory results. This evaluation is very important because, at times, in a hurry to progress and in competition to get ahead of everyone else, ambitious aspirations cast such a strong influence that the overall purpose and intent of development get lost in their pandemonium. As a result, the efforts that should be moral, meaningful, positive, and earn respect are transformed into frenzied activities because they are driven not by altruism but egoism and ambition.

If we rationally analyze today's state of affairs, we come to this very conclusion. It seems that some form of mania has probably overpowered the human psyche, as a result of which humans have directed their efforts to destroy and ruin this beautiful creation of God, the whole world. It looks like some mad race is underway where everyone is running in the wrong direction and blindly following the route to self-destruction.

If we are cutting away the very branch of the tree we are sitting upon, what can this act be called if not madness and lunacy? This is exactly what it seems when we look at the formidable and frightening problem of environmental pollution. And before discussing what role human beings have played and which acts of humans have created this problem, it is worth looking at the enormity of this problem. Environmental pollution is a matter of concern for the whole world. This problem is not related to any religion, caste or creed, or nation but the entire humanity. If the air does not remain worthy of breathing, water does not remain potable, and the earth refuses to produce food grains, the ill effects of this will have to be borne not by a locality but the entire humankind. Unfortunately, the sad truth is that despite being well aware of this fact, people can be seen continuing to live their lives with complete indifference.

Readers may recollect that recently when the air pollution in Delhi was at its peak, Indian Medical Council had to declare it a national calamity. The presence of polluting elements in the air had risen to a level that was 34 times higher than acceptable limits. Clearly, what was being breathed at that time was nothing less than poison. The pollution had turned the entire atmosphere venomous. While we take pride in all our economic achievements, why do we forget that in the list of 120 countries of the whole world, India is placed poorly at 96th rank in terms of its air quality? Is this not shameful? Is it not a matter of concern that air pollution has deteriorated the air quality of 80% of our big cities to poisonous levels? Among the causes of death in India, air pollution is the fifth largest factor. We can look at it this way: even wars and acts



Life is like riding a bicycle. In order to keep your balance, you must keep moving.

- Albert Einstein



of terrorism do not kill as many people as air pollution. In 2012, air pollution was the sole cause of death of 92 lakh people. Imagine that air pollution has deteriorated the respiratory system of 10 lakh children in the NCR.

Air has got polluted right in front of our eyes. And is the pollution of water any less? In some places, the water of river Ganga has become so contaminated with metals like chromium and nickel that after drinking its water, animals are getting afflicted with serious diseases. What effect this water will have on humans can be easily imagined.

Contamination of the environment is at such a level that the rains from above are no more a cause for joy and celebration because they bring down loads of toxic elements with them. In 1990, the industries in India released 4400 kilotonnes of Sulphur into the atmosphere, and this quantity has risen to about 19000k kilotonnes today. This Sulphur mixes with rainwater and turns it into sulphuric acid, which falls upon the earth. This acidic rain harms aquatic animals and medicinal plants. When even solid buildings begin to disintegrate in acidic rain, what can be written about its ill effects on human beings?

It is necessary to ponder over these issues of environmental pollution. Why is the pollution at such dangerous levels? Why are the rains so toxic? Why are rivers drying up? Why are glaciers melting? Why are medicinal plants dying? Why are the seasons so unregulated? There is one main reason behind all this, at least in the Indian context - rapid and out-of-control population growth in our country.

In 1947 when India got freedom, our population was about 36 Crores which has increased to about 135 crores today. So the population has increased by 3.5 times. As a result, whatever resources were available for one person at the time

of independence, are now required to be shared by approximately the whole family.

This rising number is not of some dead objects but of living human beings. And human beings have human needs to fulfill, for which it becomes essential to invade natural resources. Living human beings require houses to live in, hospitals for medical treatment, offices to work, schools and universities to study, and as a result, malls, offices, and factories keep growing in number. When these have to be constructed, trees have to be cut. Homes and industries can be made only by using wood from the trees. And what happens when trees are cut? Fertility of soil reduces, rains reduce, and mineral resources get depleted. So, even though they seem unconnected, they are just the two sides of the same problem.

Wisdom lies in taking immediate action to stop all sources of environmental pollution so that we can pass on a clean and healthy world to our next generation. A research study has revealed that if we stop all the sources that have created this huge pollution problem right away - change our vehicles, stop smoking, shut all industries causing pollution, etc., it would still take more than



The biggest problem in the world could have been solved when it was small. - Witter Bynner



thirty years for the situation to return to normalcy. What is unfortunate is that instead of trying to take measures to stop pollution, we are plummeting towards devastation at a faster pace. We are cutting trees recklessly, the population is continuing to grow relentlessly, factories are being opened indiscriminately, and all the causes of pollution are being increased thoughtlessly. If we do not reform our policies and adopt wisdom in time, what will we end up with other than devastation, destruction, and upheaval in society?

Others in the society may take longer to understand and realize, but the already awakened and sensitive members of

Gayatri Pariwar need to take some positive and clear steps in this direction immediately. To secure the future of India and the whole world, it has become the need of the hour to take this righteous thinking to everyone, from schools to hospitals and from homes to shopping malls. The future of entire humanity looks at us with the hope that we will now enter in a state of taking some worthy decisions.

The intent behind writing these lines is that Pujya Gurudev had comprehended this oncoming situation many years back and created a strong system within Shantikunj to address it. Among the seven important missionary movements initiated by Pujya Gurudev through Shantikunj, the protection of the environment was a prominent one. Activities like the Vruksha Ganga Abhiyan, clean water mission, cleaning of pilgrimage spots, development of Shriram Upavans, etc., are some of the various movements taken up by the Mission. Everyone should participate enthusiastically in these activities.

Our Earth is a plentiful place – it generates an abundance of forests, fish, and crops every year. It is also remarkably resilient, as it not only reproduces these things as we use them but also absorbs and processes our waste: our emissions, our chemical run-off, and so on. But for the planet to maintain these capacities, we can only take as much as its ecosystems can regenerate and pollute no more than the atmosphere and rivers and soil can safely absorb. If we overshoot these boundaries, ecosystems begin to break down, and the web of life begins to unravel. That's what's happening right now.

- Jason Hickel



Don't ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up. - Robert Frost



Can Scientists Create Life in Laboratory?

Great discoveries, inventions, and advancement of research in Natural sciences since the eighteenth century had elevated the confidence and enthusiasm of the scientists so much that several of them thought they would one day successfully create life in the laboratory using some combinations and reactions of specific (bio)chemicals synthesized in their laboratories.

It was sometime in the year 1953. An experiment conducted by chemistry researchers Stanley Miller and Harold Urey at the Chicago University had triggered quite a tumult in the scientific world! The experiment was simple in procedure, but it was considered linked with the unfolding (and even mimicking!) the possible mechanism of the ‘creation of life.’ In this classic experiment, a mixture of methane, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and some other gases that are primary constituents of the Earth’s atmosphere was filled in a chamber. This gaseous mixture was passed slowly into another chamber filled with distilled water. Electric sparks to mimic lightning were also produced inside the flask. Surprisingly, after a few days, the liquid medium turned into an unforeseen solution that consisted of some organic substances, including amino acids. As amino acids are basic building blocks of proteins, the key energy source for the sustenance of life, this finding was of great importance. Many scientists acknowledged it as a decipheration of the origin of life. For some others, it was a demonstration of how life might have originated on the Earth. In their early enthusiasm, several scientists concluded that soon they would create life and Nature in their laboratories!

However, with further experimental studies, research in the related areas, and a better understanding of the subject, it became clear that it was not easy. In fact, it is not even possible to do so. It is not enough to produce amino acids. The right sequential arrangement and binding of the right kinds of amino acids are essential to generate a primary sequence of the specific size of a protein. Further, the synthesized sequence must be folded in the right kind of secondary and tertiary structure. Moreover, this structure must be made to move and rotate with flexibility and carry out the biologically meaningful function(s) according to the need and conditions in different biochemical/ ionic solutions/ mediums/ environments subject to natural stochastic fluctuations. It is more difficult than combining the words (of a strange language) in the right grammatical order to make a correct sentence and using it meaningfully in a suitable context; and doing so without using any semantic frame, dictionary, or any other source of knowledge of that language or its grammar.



Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. – Ralph Waldo Emerson



The problem is more complicated in the case of human cells, where the types, numbers, and sizes (i.e., the number of amino acids) of the proteins are significantly large. For example, suppose the protein ‘collagen’ (which is the key constituent of our skins) is to be synthesized. Then, first, its constituent 1055 amino acids will have to be synthesized and arranged in the right order to form its primary sequence.

This, in the most general case (assuming that the sequence is not known a priori, as is the case with perhaps millions of yet unknown proteins in the human body), would amount to trying out factorial of 1055 possible sequential arrangements of the required amino acids! Doing so is practically impossible in terms of time and cost, as the factorial of 1055 is a large number approximately of the order of 10^{215} (i.e., 1000000.....<216 zeros after 1>).

Amazingly, Nature’s ‘biological machine’ inside the human body does it perfectly in practically no time! And it does so for millions of proteins, almost continuously throughout one’s life! How does it do it? The readers familiar with the basics of molecular biology or biochemistry would know that the process of biosynthesis of a

specific protein is carried out by a specific gene (a specific portion of the DNA). DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is a chemical only in terms of its constituents. Then how does it generate/synthesize proteins of the desired type so efficiently whenever the need arises inside a cell? What is its guiding and controlling power? Certainly, it is the ‘life-element’ – the expression of eternal Consciousness Force in the living being.

Test Tube Baby, Cloning of Organisms, Gene Therapy, etc.:

In the early times (around 1978) of its development and successful use, the IVF (*in-vitro fertilization*) technique was popularized as the method of ‘producing babies in a test tube.’ Many people across the globe got the impression that advanced science and technology has now succeeded in synthesizing/producing life in a test tube!

However, the fact is quite different. It should be noted that the technique does not work on inert chemicals or biochemicals. If at all, it would work only on the biologically alive and ‘fit’ sperm and ovum extracted from some living being only (in this case, the ‘would be’ father and mother). The development and growth of the fetus, and eventually the birth of the child, also take place only in the uterus of an alive and fit woman (mother /surrogate mother) and not in the test tube or any outside device/medium.

Cloning some organisms like a frog and a sheep (around 1996) also created delusions in laymen’s minds that scientists have become equivalent to god, as they can create desired living being(s) in the laboratory. Here again, it should be noted that cloning experiments are conducted only on embryonic stem cells or matured adult stem cells extracted from a suitable part of the body of the healthy animal of interest. In successful experiments, the birth of the cloned organism also takes place through a suitable mother only. Moreover,



Every day is conquerable by its hours and every hour by its minutes. - Robert Brault



despite the advancement of stem cell research, so far there is no success in cloning even a tiny part of the body of any more-evolved organism — including, of course, the humans. Advancement of research in biochemistry, molecular biology, biotechnology, and ultra-tech developments in electronics have made it possible to quickly synthesize the desired peptide (sequence of amino acids in a given order)

of moderate size in a well-equipped laboratory. This technique offers potential applications in producing peptide vaccines. However, it would be able to do the targeted function only after it is injected and accepted in the patient's (or a chosen subject's) body.

Sometimes your biggest weakness can become your biggest strength

Take, for example, the story of one 10-year-old boy who decided to study judo although he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident. The boy began lessons with an old Japanese judo master. The boy was doing well, so he couldn't understand why the master had taught him only one move after three months of training. "Sensei," the boy finally asked, "Shouldn't I be learning more moves? This is the only move I know."

"But this is the only move you'll ever need to know," the Sensei replied.

Not quite understanding, but believing in his teacher, the boy kept training. Finally, the Sensei took the boy to his first tournament several months later.

Surprising himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but his opponent became impatient and charged; the boy deftly used his one move to win the game. Still amazed by his success, the boy was now in the finals. This time, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. For a while, the boy appeared to be overmatched. Then, concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee called a time-out. He was about to stop the match when the Sensei intervened.

"No," the Sensei insisted, "Let him continue." Soon after the match resumed, his opponent made a critical mistake: he dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. The boy had won the match and the tournament. He was the champion. On the way home, the boy and Sensei reviewed every move in every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind. "Sensei, how did I win the tournament with only one move?"

"You won for two reasons," the Sensei answered. "First, you've almost mastered one of the most difficult throws in all of judo. And second, the only known defense for that move is for your opponent to grab your left arm."

The boy's biggest weakness had become his biggest strength.



While seeking revenge, dig two graves - one for yourself. - Doug Horton



Moreover, even if the synthesized peptide is exactly like the primary chain of a protein, so far, there is no success in making it fold and produce that protein inside the body/cell on its own.

Technology has also made it easy to synthesize the desired sequence of the nucleotide bases (i.e., a specific segment of DNA or the desired gene) of moderate size in a suitable lab. This offers important potential application of genetic engineering¹ in healthcare (especially in inherited diseases/disorders). In spite of dedicated research in several excellent laboratories for more than two decades, this sophisticated process of 'biotechnological patch work' has not yet been truly successful in achieving any breakthrough. Major bottlenecks are identifying the gene(s) responsible for the disorder/disease. Even if the desired genes are identified, it is practically impossible to decode the functional network of these genes with many other genes. Even if this hurdle is crossed (with the help of Bioinformatics and System's Biology), still the challenge would remain, as it is not known how the modifications/manipulations/patchwork in the desired gene(s) will affect the network of the other genes and related biological functions inside the subject's body.

What if it causes some other disorders or even fatal effects? Moreover, even for a few successful experiments (in the USA) that have been cleared by the medical ethics and the concerned governing bodies (the US-FDA), the estimated cost of treatment is of the order of millions of dollars, which is beyond the reach of most people!

No doubt, considering the ultra-advanced progress of science and technology so far, there is a strong possibility that these hurdles would also be crossed someday. In any case, all these promising developments will work only inside a living body. The front-line researchers in life science know well that life cannot be created in the test tube. In fact, no function of the biological system can even be simulated *in-toto* outside the body without using some live/biological (cellular or molecular) components extracted from a living organism. This is because life is an expression and creation of the Consciousness Force, which is beyond the reach of the material-based origin and approaches of science and technology, howsoever advanced and powerful they may be.

Notes:

- 1. Genetic Engineering:** In the *ex vivo* technique, a targeted *DNA* segment from a specific cell of the embryo/patient is extracted. The faulty gene (or faulty segment of the gene) is cut (using specific enzyme assemblies and reactions in a suitable biochemical medium) and replaced by the correct genetic segment synthesized in the lab. The corrected *DNA* segment is injected back into the cell from which it was extracted. The '*in-vivo*' gene transfer technique administers the gene therapy vector either directly to the target organ or tissue or via the vascular system into vessels feeding that organ.



Work out your own salvation. Do not depend on others. – Buddha



Change Your Attitude to Enjoy Long Healthy Life

Old age, which was once considered an alternate of supreme blessedness, deep knowledge, precious experience, and human excellence, seems encumbered with despondency in present circumstances, and it appears as an unintentional deviation in God's governing principles. In today's scenario, most older people appear in deep mental anguish. Either they blame their destiny or God for being caught in this miserable state of life or feel their sorrow allayed by criticizing prevailing social customs. But facts are entirely different. The truth is that they are themselves responsible for their grief-stricken old age. They have fallen prey to premature old age due to impairment in their thought process.

In his book ‘Staying Young beyond Your Years’ (published by Funk & Wagnalls Company), Dr. H.W. Haggard writes - ‘Aversion to work is the root of old age.’ One German physician Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland has mentioned in his book titled ‘Macrobiotic: The Art of Prolonging Life’ that ‘our emotional conduct hurries old age.’ Our sadness, depressed spirit, despondency ensure expediting of old age. On the other hand, he says happiness and cheerfulness are the clues to sustaining perennial youth.

Dr. Raymond Pearl conducted a survey in which he examined 5000 people above the age of 90 years. He found that they all had some common virtues – a peaceful lifestyle, an optimistic attitude, and a bright and cheerful state of mind, which helped them survive this age.

Explaining the causes of old age, Gelett Burgess writes in his book 'Look Eleven Years Younger' that predisposition

to live in solitude also gives way to an apprehensive and distressed state of mind. Such habitual inclination to live alone indicates fast and steady movement towards old age. So long as one is obsessed with the loss of hope, sadness, frustration, all efforts of holding effective power can never prove fruitful. Those who want to live long and have a strong inclination to stay youthful should have a wide acquaintance with people. They should always live delightfully and participate in all sorts of works.

In the magazine ‘Living,’ a scholar named Andrews Allen had published a six-point program to shed old age, maintain a high level of spirit and enjoy youthful moments even in old age. They are as follows –

1. Avoid losing energy in recollecting past events of life. Those were the youthful days of struggle to speed up progress in life. Now you are ahead of that struggle period. Pleasure does not lie in the past, but the present, and the present stands before you with a treasure of pleasurable



Things sweet in taste prove sour in digestion. - **William Shakespeare**



moments in its lap. You just have to unfold them eagerly.

2. Do not get depressed about your past failures. Rather learn lessons from those disappointments and utilize present opportunities with more proficiency. Express gratitude to the Almighty who helped you win over struggles in the early years of your life. The present time comes to you to enjoy life moments. Dissipate all your worries and enjoy exultant happiness in the abysmal beatitude of nature.
3. There is no need to worry if you look a bit older in appearance. The wrinkles on your body signify your struggle during the early years of life and are symbolic of your seniority, which helps you earn respect from others. Feel pride in these signs of maturity and best utilize this time by sharing your experiences with others.
4. Working out on excessive imaginary plans may expose you to harm in old age. It is better to steadily focus on one aim that you find appropriate in given circumstances instead of embroiling in many tasks at a

time. Unnecessary riding efforts and worry result in exertion, which exaggerates the symptoms of old age. One should work commensurate with one's capacity to work and not disparage taking short periods of rest.

5. Never stop yourself from taking on new ventures in life. Instead, look out for new dimensions to energize yourself and pay attention to learning something new for personal satisfaction. Innovative ideas will energize you.
6. Never feel apprehensive and distressed about your future life. Never sit worrying that people will start neglecting you only because you no longer look youthful. Such thoughts will demoralize you. The truth is that world needs the guidance of experienced seniors like you. Your growing age has bestowed upon you the wealth of these experiences. So keep your spirit high and never turn away from utilizing them.

Later years of life are highly important regarding ability, talent, and experiences. But this period of life of most people goes waste for no reason because old age starts dominating due to irrelevant concerns and apprehensions. Undoubtedly aging signs start appearing due to the passing of time. Greying hair, visual defects, impaired hearing are not the signs of frailty but symptoms of age-related transformations, which can be restricted to some extent, but this is not fair to regard them as a sign of infirmity. There have been hundreds of people who remained full of youthful energy for the entire period of their lives. No doubt age-related changes appeared to them also, but they did not get carried away with them. On the contrary, they utilized every moment with the same enthusiasm and energy as their youthful days.



Never saw off the branch you are on unless you are being hanged from it. - Stanislaw Lec



Scientists who deal with mental processes and behavior are fast believing that youth is more related to the state of mind than age. A steady and exquisite happy mental state can escape the man from old age forever. Gandhiji regarded himself as a young person even at the age of 80. His energy level at that age, too, was worth appreciation. Revealing this mystery, he once disclosed that – ‘I never allowed circumstances to dominate me. Proper utilization of every moment of my life and avoiding my mind from irrelevant thoughts is the secret of my perennial youth’. Churchill

assailed old age with contemptuous words. He said – ‘Old age is like a ripened mango with more sweetness.’ George Bernard Shaw said that nature’s real pleasure could be enjoyed only in later years of life. Enriched with his past experiences and enjoying the benedictions of Almighty to this world, man can be very fruitful to society.

The Midas Touch

There is a story of the greedy king named Midas. He had a lot of gold; the more he had, the more he wanted. He stored all the gold in his vaults and spent time counting it every day.

One day, while he was counting, a stranger came from nowhere and said he would grant him a wish. The king was delighted and said, “I would like everything I touch to turn to gold.” The stranger asked the king, “Are you sure?” The king replied, “Yes.” So the stranger said, “Starting tomorrow morning with the sun rays, you will get the golden touch.” The king thought he must be dreaming; this couldn’t be true. But the next day, when he woke up, he touched the bed, his clothes, and everything turned to gold. He looked out of the window and saw his daughter playing in the garden. He decided to give her a surprise and thought she would be happy. But before he went to the garden, he decided to read a book. The moment he touched it, it turned into gold, and he couldn’t read it. Then he sat to have breakfast, and the moment he touched the fruit and the glass of water, they turned to gold. He was getting hungry, and he said to himself, “I can’t eat and drink gold.” Just about that time, his daughter came running, and he hugged her, and she turned into a gold statue. After that, there were no more smiles left.

The king bowed his head and started crying. The stranger who gave the wish came again and asked the king if he was happy with his golden touch. The king said he was the most miserable man. The stranger asked, “What would you rather have, your food and loving daughter or lumps of gold and her golden statue?” The king cried and asked for forgiveness. He said, “I will give up all my gold. Please give me my daughter back because, without her, I have lost everything worth having.” The stranger said to the king, “You have become wiser than before,” and he reversed the spell. He got his daughter back in his arms, and the king learned a lesson that he never forgot for the rest of his life.



Watch the little things; a small leak will sink a great ship. - Benjamin Franklin



Hard Work Alone Triumphs

In India, for proper progress of the nation, we need to give importance and respect to hard work like we do with truth and adopt the words *shram eva jayate* (hard work alone triumphs) as the motto phrase on the pattern of *satyameva jayate* (truth alone triumphs). This movement is in accord with India's *rishi* tradition. Labor is neglected by only those who cannot grasp the truth of life. Those who understand 'truth' consider hard work as essential and a virtue that augments the glory of life.

In our culture, God is considered *Satchidananda* (*sat-chit-ananda*). *Sat* is that which is real, noble, and eternal. *Chit* means conscious, energetic, and active. By incorporating these two attributes, *ananda* is achieved. Success and victory in material and spiritual spheres are attained through these very means.

Satyameva jayate, i.e., only the one who understands *sat* and gives importance to the true underlying bases of life, marches ahead and reaches the goal. On the other hand, one who is disconnected with truth and treats right

as wrong and wrong as right only wastes his life running after illusory charms of oases and, in the end, becomes a victim of disappointment and remorse.

The irony is that most people consider the above *sutra* as correct in principle but not feasible in practice. They want to take the easy route to achieve their goals by merely showing truth rather than *sadhana* of truth. They treat truth and honesty not as a rule but only as a policy of convenience. Such people do not believe in the principle of *satyameva jayate*.

Most people do not understand what exactly is *satya* or truth. Instead of trying to understand its true meaning, they keep trying with all their energy to establish their own perception or thinking as the truth. To understand truth, one has to refine both -one's sense of discrimination and courage. Param Pujya Gurudev has explained the meaning of truth in the second volume of *Pragya Purana* - "Truth is not confined to mere words; it inheres in emotions and objectives." To illustrate this, he gave the following example-

"Two *thugs* (cheats) befriend a person. At an opportune moment, one thug picks the person's purse and puts it in the pocket of the other thug. When the victim asks where his purse is, the first *thug* replies - "I swear in the name of god it is not with me." The other *thug* also says - "I too swear that I have not even touched it." Now, judging by the words superficially, both are speaking the truth, but it is not 'the truth' because both intend to cheat the person. They both know the reality. Still taking recourse to semantics, they are avoiding speaking the truth; rather, they are killing the fact.



Don't despise empiric truth. Lots of things work in practice for which the laboratory has never found proof. - Martin H. Fischer



In contrast to this, a doctor, in order to buoy up a patient, tells him that the operation would be simple even though it is not so, or a guardian pacifies an obstinate child with pleasant but false promises. The words of both these persons might not be true in the narrow sense of the term, but their intention and purpose being noble, they too are seekers of truth.

Hence, if *satyameva jayate* has to be ensconced in life, the resolve to know its real meaning and the courage to adopt it in life both have to be awakened. One who understands the truth of life will understand the importance and glory of labor. Otherwise, he would merely make a show of both truth and labor and later discard them.

The clarion call for truth and labor is therefore necessary. If the foundation of life is *sat* (truth), the spontaneous nature of life is *chit* (conscious or animate). Inanimate is inactive; animate is active. Therefore, the essential attribute of this world is consciousness or activity. The *Upanishad* has an illustrative anecdote about the origin of the world - "Intending to create the world God did *tapa*, *tapa* led to sweating, and the world arose from this sweat." In other words, this world is born of human endeavor (*purushartha*), and it is hard work through which it succeeds. Why

has labor been called *tapa* here? We can understand this based on the thoughts of Param Pujya Gurudev.

If hard work has to be meaningful, the *sadhaka* should have three qualities: (1) respect towards work, (2) sufficient capability to do work, and (3) creativity in work. All these three qualities are associated with the word *tapa*. One may look down upon labor as petty, but the generation of honor and respect with *tapa* is spontaneous.

Tapa is practiced continuously till the objective is achieved. This points to the capacity element of labor. *Tapa* is done to accomplish some noble purpose; hence the creativity aspect of work too is attached with it. That is why the *Upanishadic rishi* has expressed work as a *tapa*. If we have to make labor honorable, we will have to look at it with the same feeling of piousness and reverence as we do with *tapa*. Unfortunately, today labor has begun to be seen as low and dishonorable work. We will have to change this mindset and awaken a feeling of respect towards labor.

It has been said in *Ishawasyopnishad*- "*Kurvanneveha karmani jijivishet shatam samah.*" [Meaning - Let us resolve to live for hundred years doing work]. Why did not the *rishi* of the *Upanishad* talk of living hundred years while resting or indulging or doing nothing? Because in the absence of work, the right to relax or enjoy or even live a hundred years is taken away from us. We forfeit these entitlements. It is with work that life unravels its myriad layers of greatness and riches. If we want fulfillment in life, we have to engage in labor. Swami Vivekanand has said - "Work is life. A society which does not give importance to work soon degenerates."

The American billionaire Henry Ford writes - "Our work not only provides us with the means of life, but it gives



The best way to predict your future is to create it. - Peter Drucker



life itself.” It is our work that inspires us to march ahead and opens up the door to immense possibilities of life. Labor forms the solid foundation of a developed life and bright future. Barton writes - “Labor is a powerful magnet which pulls whatever is good and lofty towards it.”

Many people would say cynically - “We have labored hard all along, but what did we get?” The answer to this is that if labor is done with the attitude of *sadhana*, it gives many things to the doer. Labor bestows joy and happiness. Dr. Vishweshwaraiya has said - “Labour promotes physical and mental health; it gives contentment and happiness.” Labor means joy, while indolence means suffering and problems. A laborious person can be more contented and happy. On the other hand, laziness takes a person onto a life of dullness and negativity. Only the person who realizes the importance of labor will become devoted to working and be blessed with the divine gifts of the presiding deity of labor.

The gifts of labor are immense. The doer easily and automatically gets some of the most precious gifts of life, such as a healthy body. Only the laborious are seen to be healthy and disease-free. The shirkers are immersed in ailments

despite all the medical facilities and medicines available.

Labor wins outright when it comes to keeping different diseases or generating health benefits at bay. Rest is, of course, soothing and immensely enjoyable, but this pleasure comes only to those tired after a hard day’s work. Taking rest without first getting tired, even lying on thick spongy beds in air-conditioned rooms gives no pleasure; the sleep remains patchy. Many have to take sleeping pills, but the hard worker can enjoy deep sleep anywhere and on any surface. When he gets up, he feels charged and energetic.

There is no pleasure to match the joy of good food. But this pleasure again is felt only by those who feel deep hunger. This type of hunger is related to hard labor. People indulge in so many things to generate artificial appetite. However, food does not give them the level of satisfaction and joy that a laborious person gets routinely in simple food.

Labor refines talent. The value of contentment and joy has been explained in the context of the lives of great personalities. The person who does work in the spirit of *sadhana* easily receives all those boons. Often the intellectual type of persons do not want to waste time in physical labor and give priority to their specific work. But the cerebral persons, too, who have realized the truth of life enhance and refine their mental and physical abilities by doing some physical labor. Keeping this truth in view, it was normal in ancient times for the children of even kings and nobles to do physical work alongside receiving formal education.

The saint, reformer, and litterateur of Russia, Leo Tolstoy, too has experienced this truth and has written- “For the first forty years I concentrated on writing work only, but later realized the importance of labor.” He further writes - “Whatever work I did in 40 years could easily have been



Beware of a man of one book. - English Proverb



achieved in 14 years on the strength of the enhanced capability acquired through physical labor.”

It is well known that Sant Kabir was a weaver, Raidas was a cobbler, Nanda was a barber, and Namdev did tailoring work. Shyonak was a cleaner, and Raikya *rishi* was a porter of goods. These labor-intensive work did not lower their greatness; rather, it increased their merit and public esteem.

Lord Krishna explained this fact through his teaching of *karma* (duty) and said that everybody, whoever he might be, who does his duty is entitled to salvation. Not only this, to establish the respect for this duty and labor, Shri Krishna himself did every kind of work in his life — tended the cows as *Gopal* (shepherd), worked as charioteer to Arjuna, cleaned the floor in *Rajsuya Yagya*, even removed leftover *pattals* of guests, washed their feet, and along

with all these also gave invaluable teachings of the *Gita* to humanity. He tried to negotiate peace between Pandavas and Kauravas, and when the need arose, he even took up arms on the battlefield. He remained a *yogi* even while following the *grihastha dharma*. Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Sant Vinoba, and many others followed this path of Shri Krishna and attained greatness. Why should we hesitate then in walking this path?

Maintaining a balance in labor is also necessary. Labour should include mental and physical exertion, diligence, attentiveness, enthusiasm, and readiness. Unfortunately, those who do physical work often avoid mental labor. Hence they are called rustic and foolish. On the other hand, the educated persons, for lack of physical labor, mostly remain weak and prone to diseases.

We should realize the importance of balanced labor. Our lives should be developed in all respects. If we can awaken interest in the progressive development of both qualities, thinking power and physical activity, we would be amazed to see the accruing benefits. The whole personality could be transformed. This is a kind of *Jeevan Sadhana* and is a magical *vidya* which gives direct and visible fruits.” Labor should, therefore, be considered at par with ‘truth’ in life.

Everything that we enjoy is a result of someone’s hard work. Some work is visible, and other work goes unseen, but both are equally important. Some people stop working as soon as they find a job. Regardless of the unemployment statistics, it is hard to find good people to work. Many people don’t understand the difference between idle time and leisure time. Idle time amounts to wasting or stealing time; leisure time is earned. Procrastinating amounts to not working.

Excellence is not luck; it is the result of a lot of hard work and practice. Hard work and practice make a person better at whatever he is doing.

- Shiv Khhera



You’ve got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was. - Irish Proverb



Efficient Management of Plastic Waste

There are eight cities in India, including our country's capital, Delhi, and our financial capital, Mumbai, which never halt or stop. But recently, plastic waste has become an impediment to their speed. How unfortunate it is that these cities, which set the trend of our national economy, are not even in a position to cope with marginal rainfall. Within a few minutes of precipitation, their streets and localities overflow with water, and life comes to a standstill.

If the increasing mass of plastic waste that is constantly getting trapped in the drains in big cities is not removed in time, this crisis may even worsen in the coming days. The plastic waste scattered all around these days is destroying the drainage system, creating a flood-like situation even with the slightest of rains.

Over five percent of our population dwells in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Dehradun, Ranchi, and Patna. These metropolitan cities contribute significantly to speeding up

our economy, but they are also being stifled under the burden of plastic.

The question that arises is how much rain can our cities withstand? First, let us consider the two most important cities of our nation. Mumbai, which gets choked with water every time, even with light rainfall, can merely withstand precipitation at the rate of twenty-five millimeters per hour. Anything over and above this limit may lead to the rowing of boats in the city.

Similar is the case of Delhi, the capital of India, which can withstand only sixty millimeters of continuous rainfall. According to a recent research report of Prof. A. K. Gosain of I.I.T. Delhi, the chief cause of clogging of the drainage system in Delhi has been a plastic waste.

Today, the country's capital tops in the production of plastic waste. While Kolkata, which has been the former capital of India sometime before independence, is able to recycle only one-tenth of the total plastic waste. Similarly, Bangalore, popularly known as the 'Silicon Valley of India,' is world-renowned for its I.T. sector. But, with development, plastic waste in the city is also soaring in the same proportion. This has reduced the capacity of its drainage system to half. Not much different is the situation in Chennai, which suffered the brunt of the flood in 2015.

While pondering upon this problem, banning plastics is not a permanent remedy. Rather we have to find ways to use plastic waste constructively. 'Plastic Man,' Professor Rajagopalan Vasudevan suggested building roads from plastic waste.



It is a false shame of fools to try to conceal wounds that have not healed. – Horace



In 2002, Vasudevan presented a paper titled 'Use of Plastic Waste in Road Construction,' which was highly appreciated in our country and abroad. In 2004, he came out with an upgraded version of this research. As a result, numerous countries showed interest in making roads out of plastic waste. In this technique, plastic waste is first broken down into fine particles of equal sizes and then mixed with a gravel-asphalt solution heated to a temperature of 170°C and then added to molten tar. As a result, quite strong, durable, and eco-friendly roads could be constructed with this process, which requires very low construction and maintenance costs. Vasudevan built the first road based on his technology in the Thiagarajar Engineering College campus in Madurai. After this, many small and big cities in twelve states began adopting his method of constructing roads from plastic waste. In 2015, the Central Government made the use of plastic waste mandatory in road construction within fifty meters of city limits with a population of over five lakhs.

Indore, the industrial capital of Madhya Pradesh, has been declared the cleanest city in the country for the second consecutive year in a row. The chief reason behind it was the efficient management of plastic waste. Here, plastic was a big reason for the spreading of waste. People reduced using it when its use began to be fined through a legal provision.

Even shopkeepers have begun to give standard quality polythenes in the city. Indore Municipal Corporation first removed the garbage drums from the city, and garbage began to be collected from individual houses. The Municipal Corporation made such a system that the trash was collected from the shops at night, and the cleaning of the markets was also done at night. Indore Municipal Corporation has made out-of-the-box garbage vehicles with a capacity of 3.3 cubic meters, which can collect garbage from one thousand houses each. Earlier, this

capacity was limited to three hundred homes, which has now reached a widespread geographical area.

Now the process of cleaning in Indore city goes on 24×7. Women separate the wet and dry waste before handing it over to the municipal corporation. Here, children have been made ambassadors of cleanliness to check the elders also when there is a lack of cleanliness in the homes. Sanitation committees have been formed in the schools and colleges. In this way, the experiment of Indore city is an inspiration for many.

It is worth remembering that recently, Halifax city of Canada had to impose an emergency due to plastic waste. But many cities around the globe are carrying on unique experiments to deal with plastic debris. One such initiative is - 'Bring plastic waste and eat for free.' This scheme is going on in the 'Rubbish Cafe' in London, where it is not necessary to have money with you to enjoy your favorite tea, coffee or snacks. One can even eat here by exchanging plastic waste present in the house, provided the waste is recyclable.

An organization named 'E-cover' has taken a bold initiative to open a restaurant called 'The Rubbish Cafe' to tackle the increasing burden



When you lose, don't lose the lesson. - Author Unknown



of plastic waste on the earth. This scheme is for two days a month when customers pay for their bills in the restaurant, not in cash but through plastic waste, which is then sent to the recycling plants. Moreover, 'The Rubbish Cafe' follows the principle of 'Zero-Waste Menu.' In this, pre-fixed dishes are prepared in limited quantities and served to the customers on a 'first come, first served' policy so that food is not wasted.

Similarly, Principe Island makes use of steel bottles instead of plastic ones. 'We are coming to replace your plastic bottles. Have you collected those bottles?' - Teams from the Biosphere Reserve of Principe Island in Africa enter the island once every three months with this proclamation. As soon as they reach, people begin to throng in large numbers at the 'bottle depots' built on the main squares of the island. They carry sacks full of plastic bottles with them. The team of Biosphere Reserve gives them reusable steel bottles upon returning fifty plastic bottles.

The Principe administration launched a 'No plastic' scheme in association with UNESCO in 2013 with the intention of making the island plastic-free. Under this initiative, they successfully collected over eight lakh plastic bottles by March 2021.

Another such example is Malang city in Indonesia, where the residents do not throw plastic waste. This is because they get health insurance gift in exchange for plastic waste. N.G.O. named 'Indonesia Medica' has been running the 'Garbage Clinical Insurance' scheme in Malang since 2010.

Under this scheme, the local people take advantage of health insurance by depositing recyclable plastic waste in the 'Waste Insurance Clinic' built in the city. By depositing plastic waste of four and a half pounds (about 2 kgs), they get an insurance cover of ten thousand Indonesian rupees, which is enough to cover the cost of two times of general illness. To raise money for insurance claims, the N.G.O. sells the plastic waste to the recycling plants.

Plastic is no less precious than gold in Malaysia. These days, this country is witnessing an eagerness to collect plastic waste. Actually, a startup named 'Hello Gold' has started a unique 'E-Gold' scheme in association with a Reserve Vending Machine (R.V.M.) company called 'Clean.' In this scheme, 'E-gold' is deposited in the accounts of customers upon depositing plastic bottles and tin cans. This 'E-gold' can be redeemed according to the gold price of that particular day.

To take advantage of the scheme, one has to download the 'Hello Gold App' and create an account. When the users insert plastic bottles in any of the five hundred 'Clean R.V.M.' machines installed across the country, 'E-gold' gets credited to their account. 'Hello Gold' offers 'E-Gold' equivalent to 0.00059 grams of gold for a single plastic bottle or tin can. There are numerous such initiatives ongoing across the globe for the management of plastic waste, which could serve as the basis for finding a proper solution to this issue.



Your future depends on many things, but mostly on you. - Frank Tyger



Creative Writing by Youth

The Indian youth is now turning to creative writing. Several brilliant young men and women are writing on realistic and value-oriented topics. Amish Tripathi chose value-oriented writing over fiction to present his views on India. His book titled “*Amar Bharat*” deals with religion, history, feminism, citizen’s rights, and many other burning topics. Amish says, “We all know very well that we will progress only if the nation progresses. But still, we are concerned only about our rights. A balance between our rights and duties is very important. We talk about rules for others but don’t follow them ourselves like stopping at the red signal after midnight.”

Amish has taken to value-oriented writing for the first time to comment on many such real issues. Many other young writers like Sanjiv Sanyal, Sandeep Dev, Pranjal Dhar, Rajiv Ranjan Prasad, Nalotpal Mrinal, Rajiv Gupta, Sachin Garg, etc., rather than writing fictional stories on love and relationships, are writing interesting and relevant books on the country and its current problems. Publishers also agree that readers are more inclined towards books written on realistic topics than fictional ones these days.

Economist, an environmentalist, and chief advisor in the finance ministry, Sanjiv Sanyal, once said in an interview, “I am filled with thoughts rather than being consumed with personal life goals,” which is quite true because he has constantly been writing for the country’s welfare and also about the problems and challenges that our country is facing. *Land of Seven Rivers*, *Incredible History of India’s Geography*, and *The Ocean of Churn* are some of his

realistic and incidental books, which the readers liked very much. India is a land of diversity. One doesn’t have to rely on fiction as there is so much to write about India — its culture, history, and thoughts. Non-fictional compositions are the best when it comes to writing about the betterment of the country and society, says Pranjal Dhar.

Rajiv Ranjan Prasad has written a novel named “*Amcho Bastar*” on the issue of racism. He says, “Since I grew up in Bastar, I am very well aware of the problems and issues there. However, I found that articles written on the situation of Bastar are nowhere close to reality. So to bring the truth to light, I have written this novel. In his book, *We Need a Revolution*, Sachin Garg put forward authentic information about the Jarva tribe of the Andaman and Nicobar Island and presented their reality.

Distinct from popular literature, Pranjal Dhar’s writing focuses on the ‘reality’ of journalism today. Journalism is said to be the fourth pillar of democracy. However, as Pranjal points out, this profession seems to have deviated from its path today.



Dig the well before you are thirsty. - Chinese Proverb



He says, “After studying journalism and working as a journalist, I didn’t find everything proper here. Press in western society keeps an account of the good and not so good work done by the journalists. But in India, there is no such practice. So I thought of taking on journalism which is known to take on everyone, and wrote books like “*Media aur Hamara Samaj*” and “*Samakaleen Vaishvik Patrakarita Mein Akhbar*.”

If we want to infuse patriotism in our fellow citizens, we should bring forth Swami Vivekanand’s thoughts on India and religion, Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle for freedom, and also the valuable contribution of Kasturba Gandhi, so says Anil Singh, who writes on political and contemporary issues. Ashutosh Partheshwar, a writer from Bihar, was keen to know — how the newspapers and magazines covered Gandhiji’s *Satyagrah* in Champaran. While researching for his book, he came across this surprising fact that a magazine named “*Stree Darpan*” of that time gave the context of the Champaran Satyagrah, but “*Saraswati*,” the then well-known Hindi literature magazine, finds no mention of it!

Like Ashutosh, writer Rajiv Gupta is also of the opinion that young India should know Swami Vivekanand through

realistic writing than fictional stories. So he wrote a facts-based book on Swami Vivekanand depicting his life and thoughts on Indian culture and religion. Swamiji’s speech on religion at the Chicago conference has been specifically highlighted in the book. Everyone knows about Mahatma Gandhi, but very few know about the contribution of Kasturba Gandhi in the struggle for freedom. To bring this to light, Neelima Dalmia wrote “*The Secret Diary of Kasturba*.” Although this book has been categorized as fiction, she says it has substantial authentic information.

Arun Anand has written many life stories. He has written purely informative books like “*Organ Donation*,” “*Know About RSS*,” “*Indian- The Nobel Laureate*.” Pankaj Prasoona writes completely differently from all the above. He writes satirical poetry and articles on politics, election, unemployment, demonetization, the polarization of the political parties, etc. He says, “I wrote “*Janhit Mein Jaari*” as I feel that satire and non-fiction hits on the system to achieve betterment.” His other satirical book was “*Prasoona ke Panch*.” According to Arun Anand, fiction can be written in less time, whereas informative books demand more time and authentic evidence.

Rachna Bisht Rawat, who comes from a military background as her husband, father, and brother are army men, has written her third book on Indian soldiers named “*Shoot, Dive, Fly*.” A few years back, her husband got transferred to Ferozpur, near the Indo-Pak border. There she saw several posters of the Paramvir Chakra recipients on a wall. She says, “It is surprising that many of us are unaware of the brave and heroic acts of the soldiers who have been awarded the Paramvir Chakra. So I wrote “*Shoorveer*” and “*1965- Bharat- Pak Yuddh Ki Virgathayein*,” which narrates true stories of these brave soldiers.”



Be nice to people on your way up because you'll need them on your way down. - W. Migner



Do not be Afraid of Adversities

As day and night are the two aspects of time, prosperity and poverty, pleasure and pain are the two wheels of the cycle of life. Therefore, one should remain prepared mentally for both situations. Neither should one keep wailing in bad times nor become supercilious during good times.

There are four companions of a person in times of crisis — (i) prudence, (ii) patience, (iii) courage, and (iv) endeavor. By holding steadfast to these four pillars, one can gradually see through the bad phase. In the process, one is also gifted with a host of useful experiences, abilities, virtues, and strengths. A knife is sharpened by rubbing it on stone; gold's sparkling purity emerges through the flames of fire. Similarly, failure and adversities teach a person so many lessons that even ten gurus together cannot impart. Therefore, adversities should not be feared but faced courageously and wisely.

The path to progress passes through the blows given by adversities. In this ordeal lies hidden the scheme of success and development. If life is always easy-going and cushioned, man's energy and alertness will gradually fade, and he will become lazy and shirker. There will arise a kind of stagnation in the mind, which will block the path to inquiry, adventure, ambition, and progress. Unless one has experienced the pain of bad times, one can not enjoy the pleasure of good times either. If there is no night, the day will lose its charm. If there are no salty, spicy, or bitter items in food and it tastes only sweet, this sweetness will become burdensome to bear later. Similarly, comfort can be enjoyed only

when interspersed with occasional discomfort in life.

The reason behind the greatness, glory, and respect of all the great persons of the world is their willing acceptance of sufferings. Had Raja Harishchandra not sold himself to a bhangi, he too would have lived and died unknown like thousands of other kings and nobles. The trees that grow in hardy terrain or on rocky hills acquire big size and long life, whereas the plants in a garden that are tended daily are short-lived. A society and nation which faces hardships with grit become progressive, prosperous, and victorious.

Our ancestors were well aware of the great benefit of the attribute of forbearance. That is why they assigned its practice a prominent place in the scheme of life. They practiced bearing pain and ordeal through the discipline of *titiksha* and *tapashcharya*, just as a soldier has to get trained for a long time before fighting at the border. We know that even the children of kings went to *gurukuls* of *rishis* for education and



The future lies before you, like paths of pure white snow. Be careful how you tread it, for every step will show. - Author Unknown



had to live a life of austerity and strict discipline. A swimmer is thrilled when he gets an opportunity to swim across a river or lake. Similarly, the practitioner of a hard life sees a possibility of self-development and higher attainment when he has to tread across many kinds of difficulties and problems. In contrast, ease-loving persons who want only comfort, when faced with even routine issues of daily life, begin to gasp so much with anxiety and distress as if some calamity has befallen them.

Difficulties arise in the life of everyone, and their coming is essential too, not only to cancel out the burden of *karmic* acquisitions but also to refine, purify and strengthen the mind and sentient soul of a person.

God blesses humanity with myriad boons and gifts. He also sends pains and sufferings to destroy man's ignorance, ego, laziness, and impurity. It has been rightly said - "One adversity imparts more education than ten *gurus*. Showing cowardice and becoming a chest beater or blaming others when problems come in life is unjustified. This is akin to discarding the great blessings of God. With this negative mental frame, the adversities would not provide any benefit. Rather these would become the cause of

disillusionment, misery, and depression. Becoming terrified in the face of difficulties, abandoning all efforts, and drowning oneself in anxiety does not behoove a worthy person. Adversity is, in a way, a divine challenge to our *purushartha* (object of human pursuit). Only by accepting it can we make ourselves dear to God. In a wrestling arena, the *ustad* teaches his disciples wrestling maneuvers and tricks by repeatedly hitting them and felling them on the ground. The disciples, too, do not run away after these thrashings but learn from their weaknesses and mistakes and rise again to take on their guru with renewed enthusiasm. By repeatedly doing so, they too become master wrestlers in due time. God, too is like the master who fells us time and again by the blows of adversities and removes our many weaknesses, ultimately goading us onto the path of perfection.

There is no need to be apprehensive of problems. These are essential, useful, and part of the universal scheme of nature. One need not be disheartened or sulky or blame others for it. What is needed is that after every adversity, one faces the new one with renewed zeal, finds out the weaknesses, and constantly tries to turn the situation in one's favor. This is the *dharma* (duty) of the soul; to give up this endeavor is to give up one's *dharma*. The glory of work is infinite. The suffering caused by adversity pale into insignificance before the golden opportunity one gets to grapple with it and overcome it, and its consequential benefit in uplifting oneself to a higher level. Endeavour is the primary means for the development of the self; adversities accelerate this process.

The glory of man increases by making continual efforts and sincere dutifulness. Therefore, those who desire to live life in joy and happiness should pursue the path of duty with a smile on their face without being deterred by problems and adversities.



Remedy it, or welcome it: a wise man's only two choices. - Terri Guillemets



How to Overcome Despair?

Despair is a terrible mental state that saps all the powers and potentials of a person. It has been considered a sin in the scriptures. What is the point in keeping the feeling of hopelessness for a long time, which neither gives pleasure to oneself nor brings happiness to others? In fact, enthusiasm is the elixir of life. It is even mentioned in the Valmiki Ramayana that there is great power in enthusiasm, and there is no other force greater than it. Nothing in the world is unattainable for an enthusiastic person.

While hope ushers vital force into life, despair leads to death because a disappointed person becomes indifferent and detached from life. One finds darkness all around him, and the person goes into a state of mental lethargy. In this way, life becomes difficult in the absence of zeal. Everything becomes tough for a discouraged person.

Disappointed with life, a person becomes indifferent even towards his duties and feels reluctant and inferior towards them. Consequently, no grandeur and prosperity can be expected in his life. The relatives living in his shelter also remain underdeveloped. In this way, lack of zeal is considered a crime. The sooner one can come out of this state of mind, the better. This task can be accomplished by understanding the reasons for disappointment.

There can be numerous reasons for the depressed state of mind. It can arise due to any disease or disorder in the body. Indigestion, constipation, excessive exertion, inadequate rest and sleep, and fatigue may also lead to despair and apathy. However, it is not much difficult to overcome such suffering.

A person could effortlessly overcome such situations by improving his health by making requisite improvements in his lifestyle, following a balanced schedule, and abiding by the rules of nature.

One of the major reasons for disappointment is to have high expectations from our loved ones while not accepting the reality of life. The immature and extreme thought patterns, like - the entire world should think like us or follow everything that we say or that everything should happen in our favor, become the cause of disappointment. How can one expect that everything should be according to him in this ever-changing and diverse world and remain the same forever?

Profit-loss, associations-dissociations, old age, and death are the realities of life; by accepting which, the mind becomes free from unnecessary despair and dejection. There is no other way but to accept this reality. Adjusting life in this way, according to the rhythm of the eternal law of change, can be considered a great skill.



To know the road ahead, ask those coming back. - Chinese Proverb



Excessive thinking about the past and future and leaving the present may also cause despair. Some people remain upset because of loss, humiliation, pain, or past mistakes. Some become depressed by the probable dangers or horrifying suspicions about the future. Both the situations are undesirable. Thinking too much about the past and being repentant and remorseful and hence, depressed is worthless. Similarly, it is also not correct to be worried about adversities in the future. Most of these things never happen. Instead, if one could learn from his past mistakes and make efforts in the present with the resolution of a bright future, he could get rid of the miseries of the past and the anxiety arising from worrying about the future.

Moreover, there is a direct relation of disappointment with the point of view of an individual. One will get motivations according to his thoughts and feelings. If the perspective and feelings of an individual are predominantly self-centered and he is more concerned about his benefit,

he is bound to suffer from dissatisfaction, depression, and despair. On the contrary, the more a person thinks of altruism and social welfare, the more his life becomes endowed with hope, enthusiasm, and happiness.

In this way, as soon as life turns from selfishness to altruism, the darkness of despair begins to dissipate, and there is a new infusion of hope. The monotony following the same fixed routine over time may also cause disappointment. Having diversity in life becomes important in overcoming this state. This can be done by incorporating any vivid and zealous aspects of life like art, music, literature, sports, entertainment, public relations, travel, pilgrimage, or religious activities, into the routine.

Consider life as a game. Play your role like a skilled-character in the drama of the theater of life. If you make any mistake along the way, do not take it too seriously, rather learn from it and move forward. Life is made up of both sides, like morning and evening and night and day. Looking at them with a similar outlook helps lead a light-hearted life. So, do not focus only on the dark side, but think about the positive side as well. The seeds of bright possibilities will surely be found even amidst the greatest darkness of life. Keep giving them the manure and water of your endeavors and constant efforts. They will blossom on time and spread their fragrance in the garden of life. In this way, constantly augmenting the inherent potentials and having unwavering faith in the divine law proves to be a sure highway to overcome any disappointment.

If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort, you will not get either comfort or truth, only soft soap, and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair.

- C. S. Lewis



God is good but never dance in a small boat. - Irish Saying



Invocation

and Enshrinement - 4

The Lighting of Fire in the Yagya-Kundas

The procedure of *yagya* began with loud chanting of Vedic Mantras for *swasti-vachan*, *raksha vidhan*, etc.; the *siddha agni* brought from the Himalayas was to be enshrined in the *yagya-kunda* kept in the center. Then *samidhas* in the four *yagya-kundas* around it were to be ignited by the process of *arani manthan*.

Acharyashri stood up, wore his *khadau* (wooden sandals), and walked slowly toward the central *yagya-kunda*. He was holding the pot containing the incessant fire brought from the Himalayas. Mataji also walked beside him. They sat near the central *yagya-kunda*. With the chants of “*swa dyauriva bhumna, prathivavarimna, prashthe agnim...*” invocation *mantras* (of fire-god) by Pandit Lalkrishna Pandya and *sadhakas* standing in and around the *yagyashala*, doing some silent prayers himself, Acharyashri placed the pious Himalayan fire in the middle of the *yagya-kunda* where cotton *batti* soaked in *ghee* was already kept. Acharyashri and Mataji then worshipped the fire.

In no time, the flames arose and ignited the *samidhas* in the *kunda*; some *ahutis* of *ghee* were offered instantly with chants of prescribed *mantras*. The fire spread in the *kunda* with the bright radiance of bluish, greenish, reddish, yellowish glow. There was no trace of smoke in or around the *kunda*. According to the experts of the science of *yagya*, the rising flames of *yagya-kunda* without any smoke are essential for adequate processing of *ghee* and herbal offerings in the *yagya*. Also, as per some scriptures, this indicates that the fire god is blissfully accepting the offerings, and that emergence of

the greenish flame indicates a special spiritual effect.

Now it was the turn of lighting *yagya*-fire in the remaining *kundas* by *arani manthan*. In this process, the fire was to be ignited simply by the friction of two *samidhas* of *Shami* and *Palash* with chants of special *mantras*. The cotton *batti* soaked in *ghee* and dry wood pieces (of Mango and Peepal) were already placed in these *kundas*. Four couples were sitting around each *kunda*. People were excited to see how the spark of fire would be ignited using the power of *mantras* without any support of a matchstick, fire-stone, lighter, or any inflammable material! They had heard or read of such things only in the Puranas or mythological scriptures. Even Pandit Lalkrishna, who was conducting the *yagya*, was unsure how *arani manthan* would work. He even advised Acharyashri to use some inflammable substance for the safer side a couple of times. But Acharyashri was confident of the success of this unique experiment.

As summer was at its peak in June, the Sun rose early in the morning at



Too many people overvalue what they are not and undervalue what they are. - Malcolm S. Forbes



Mathura. It was a few minutes past dawn, and the reddish ball of the Sun was peeping upwards from the East, as though it was also eager to witness the rare event! Acharyashri sat in front of the *yagya-kunda* in the *agneya* (south-east) corner of the *yagyashala*. Mataji sat on his left side. Each of them held a pair of *Palash* and *Shami samidhas* that Mataji had brought from Akhand Jyoti Sansthan. Their arms were spread forward till the middle of the *kunda*; the *samidhas* in their hands almost touched those inside the *kunda*. Now they closed their eyes and prayed with chants of the first hymn 1.1 of the first *Mandal* (chapter) of the Rig Veda.

With this, they scrubbed the two *samidhas* (kept in their hands) on each other. Amazing! People could not believe their eyes! A bright spark emerged immediately, as though a powerful lighter was being used. The dry wood pieces and cotton *batti* in the *kundas* caught fire and started burning in a few moments. As in the main (central) *kunda*, some *ahutis* of *ghee* were offered immediately after this. The well-lighted fire was then carried to the remaining three *kundas* with the help of ignited wood pieces. Now the rituals of *yagya* began.

Acharyashri and Mataji sat in front of the central *kunda*. Four couples among

the participating *sadhakas* were sitting around the other four *yagya-kundas*. They all worshiped the fires lighted (by *arani manthan*) in these *kundas*. The first round of *yagya* was completed in nearly two-and-a-half hours. The *sadhakas* who could not sit in the first round were seated outside the *yagyashala* and chanting the *mantras* jointly with those participating in the *yagya*. They got the opportunity to do *yagya* on the next day, as the *yagya* and other events associated with the enshrinement of Gayatri in the temple of Tapobhumi were to continue for three days.

After the first session of *yagya*, a five-flamed *deepaka* of *ghee* was lighted in the temple with some rituals. The idol of the deity was still covered. Non-stop *Japa of Gayatri Mantra* along with some other *sadhanas* was to be done in the temple before the invocation and enshrinement of the Supreme Power of Gayatri. Mataji had lighted this *deepaka*. She was looking after the *Akhand Jyoti* (incessant flame) in the *sadhana* chamber of Acharyashri in their house. She was also given the responsibility of maintaining this *deepaka* lighted throughout the event.

Mataji had already explained the *sadhana-upasana* experiments, scheduling of other sacraments, and routines of all participants during the three-day-long program to the *parijans* in-charge of these activities. Simple food consisting of *Daliya* and *Khichadi* was also prepared as part of lunch for all participants. Some *sadhakas* thought that lunch was unnecessary, as they were all observing *upavasa* for the three days. Mataji clarified that strict fasting would not be advisable as they all have to work hard all these three days. “Taking austere food only once a day is also considered *upavasa*,” — she explained.

Groups of at least 24 *sadhakas* were scheduled to do mental *japa of Gayatri Mantra* inside the temple turn by turn. A



Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you; they're supposed to help you discover who you are. - Bernice Johnson Reagon



significant number of women also participated in this *sadhana*. The news of this event stunned the orthodox and fundamentalist Hindus in Mathura and other parts of the country. How can females do the *japa* of the great *mantra*, which in their views was to be recited only by males that too silently and after proper initiation? How could so many women be part of the enshrinement sacraments of the Gayatri Temple? Their minds were fuming. But no one could hinder this grand step taken by Acharyashri towards a socio-spiritual movement.

Open-air Residence

Arrangements were made for the stay of all participants in the Dharmashalas in Mathura/Vrindavan. But no one wanted to go there; they all preferred sleeping in the open space around the temple and *yagyashala* or the nearby region of the adjacent Chamunda Devi temple premises and *bagichis* right outside the Tapobhumi. In fact, living in the vicinity of Acharyashri for a maximum time was the main charm.

There was hardly any traffic on the Vrindavan road even in the daytime; the region surrounding Tapobhumi was lonely at night. But that was not a problem, as more than 250 *sadhakas* would stay in and around the Tapobhumi. The only risk for those sleeping in the *bagichis* outside was that of antisocial elements or thieves who might create some nuisance. And it did happen on the very first day!

The participants went to sleep around 9 pm after devotional songs. Three-four thugs got mixed up with the crowd and slept there besides some participants. They were tired after the day-long hectic schedule, so they went to sound sleep within half an hour. Now the thieves started their job. But they could not get anything, as the participants hardly had some cash apart from a pair or two of daily wears in their bags. Most of them had either not brought anything else or

had deposited the extra money, journey tickets, and valuables in the office of Tapobhumi. But the thieves did not hesitate to take away whatever they could. Finally, they managed to snatch the clothes and cash from 4-5 bags and ran away.

People learned about it in the morning, but no one was disturbed. (Those having a *sadhaka's* mentality are not perturbed by materialistic losses or discomforts). Others were ready to share their belongings with those who had lost them. (Generosity and compassion are essential qualities of true *sadhakas*).

When Acharyashri heard about it, he called Mr. Rammurti Dixit and others whose things were stolen. He offered them to provide some support from the funds collected for Tapobhumi. They all humbly refused. Mr. Dixit said that we have come in this region of Mathura-Vrindavan where Lord Krishna is supposed to have manifested his *Leela* (joyful play) of *makhan-chori* (stealing homemade butter) in his childhood. Maybe some of his 'friends' have made the mischief. It is our mistake that we did not take proper care of our belongings. How can we take the money collected for God's project? They all took it easy, and the incident was forgotten then and there.



A man of personality can formulate ideals, but only a man of character can achieve them. - Herbert Read



Nobody was interested in filing any complaint, as they thought this would be unnecessary wastage of time and botheration.

The incident made the plot for an interesting episode for the cultural-cum discourse program organized in the evening. Swami Premanand artfully crafted it in his narrative discourse. He said that when Lord Ram was in Vanawas (staying in the forest during the exile), the *kolas* and *kiratas* of tribal land came for his *darshan*. Some were small thieves and thugs by profession but generally poor in financial status. They had heard about King Ram's supernormal intrepidity. They said – “We don't have anything to offer, your Highness. But we want to do something in your service. After long thought and discussion, we find only one solution, viz., we will not steal anything from your place. This is what would be the best service from our side (*Nath Hamar Yahi Sevakai, Kiye Na Basan Vasan Churai*), as otherwise we don't spare looting any passerby or inhabitant of our territory”.

The audience really enjoyed this anecdotic comment of Swamiji and reacted with an instant applaud and laughter. The next night *sadhakas* guarded each other's belonging in groups turn by turn.

As part of the cultural program the next evening (21st June), “Mauni Baba” presented a *tandav* dance. Though his title appeared like that of a Sannyasi, Baba was a married person bearing the responsibility of the household. His real name was Pandit Durga Prasad. Observing silence (*maun*) was an integral part of his routine. He used to keep total silence every Sunday. He used to be necessarily silent for one ghati (24 minutes) around Sunrise and Sunset times on other days. He had also observed the serene discipline of keeping his mouth shut in the moments of anger, anguish, or sorrow. He had not told many people about these disciplines. But people in his contact used to know it from his behavior. Thus gradually, his silence became popular among acquaintances and neighbors, and people started addressing him as “Mauni Baba.”

The *tandav* dance he presented was vivacious. It was his own creation. Though he did not wear the attire of Lord Shiva's human form traditionally used in this dance, his stout body-build, long hair and beard, and the *rudraksha* garland on his neck, together with his half *dhoti* tightly tied up to the knees, were sufficient to give the same impression. The half-an-hour-long dance was full of different *mudras* (postures) of yoga and Indian classical dance. The sound of *damaru* (pellet drum) and other traditional instruments played during the dance had added to the joy of viewers. Many residents of the village Jayasinhapura had gathered for the evening programs. Though it was a classical cultural program, they all enjoyed it as the Ramleela played on the occasion of “Dusshera” (Vijaya Dashami festival, which falls about 20 days before the festival of lights in October/November). Incidentally, it was the festival of another “Dusshera” (*Ganga Dusshera*, which was going to be celebrated across the country just the next morning along with *Gayatri Jayanti*).



Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future. - Oscar Wilde



Understand the Importance of Pictures & Be Careful in their Selection

Pictures are beautiful tools for home décor. Most people are interested in them. While educated people can enjoy the art of images, illiterate people can become attracted to their colors and sketches. In this manner, both educated and uneducated categories of people are interested in photos, which is why they happily hang them in their homes. Pictures are universally liked, but how many people know of any special use for them other than decorating their houses? Pictures not only look good, but they also affect the mind and behavior of a person based on what they depict. They create an environment of their own where the pictures are placed. In rooms where religious images are placed, people will experience pious religious sentiments. In a space where suggestive pictures are hung, one will experience a feeling of lust in that room. Pictures have their own special effect, so special care is needed in their selection.

It is well-known that what a man sees with his eyes affects his expressive mind, whether good or bad according to the object. If the same picture is seen again and again daily, then its subtle effect accumulates slowly in the subconscious mind, and it gradually creeps into human behavior and actions. Though it remains unknown, man's behavior is molded according to it. This process is so sneaky and slow that people are unaware of its ill effects, and it becomes part of their nature.

The context of the pictures and the posture and gestures also affect. Take, for example, the picture of Lord Krishna. If his picture is playing the flute in the normal cross-legged posture, then it will awaken devotion, and if his picture

is in the battlefield posture with his Sudarshan Chakra on his finger, then it will give rise to heroic power within. On the other hand, if its context is compassionate and painful, surely the person who sees it, even though he was happy, will become sad and upset. Where the scenes of a cheerful nature generate euphoria, the scenes of lonely and gloomy evenings will evoke a negative response in your heart. In this way, pictures are tools for decorating homes, but they have a special role in emotional regulation.

The following two examples demonstrate how intense and widespread the impact of pictures, sculptures, or figures can be on human beings. These examples have been written by the subjects themselves; one of them is Mr. Ronald Nixon, the other Mr. Dale Carnegie.

Mr. Ronald Nixon enthusiastically participated in the First German War. He was a high officer in the air fleet in that war. When the frenzy of war subsided, his heart was filled with terrible horror which he had witnessed. Murder, beatings, death, bloodshed,



An unexamined life is not worth living. – Socrates



outcry, and painful screaming images, took away his peace. He wrote that the gruesome scene of human tragedy caused a great upheaval in his heart. Despite his many efforts, his psyche was not becoming calm. Mental anxiety had made him insane.

In this state of mental anxiety, he reached Cambridge University one day. There, his eyes fell on the calm, inspiring, and beautiful statue of Lord Buddha. He stopped and looked carefully at the serene idol. Seeing it, he felt as if a fountain of peace and calmness was being emitted from the peaceful idol, which was providing tranquility to his heart. He felt that a message was coming out of the statue, “Oh son, your life is meant for peace, contentment, and joy, and to be happy - not to be miserable and sad. So let go of the sadness and worries and be happy always.” Seeing the statue of Lord Buddha, all the disturbance in his heart was removed. His heart became calm and serene like clear water. The toxic feelings of depression and despair were dispelled, and since then, he stayed happy.

The famous American writer Mr. Dale Carnegie has written from his experience, “When worldly worries and difficulties surround me, and I am disturbed, then I turn my attention to

the calm portrait of President Lincoln from the White House which is displayed on top of my desk. Looking at that picture of Lincoln, I have new enthusiasm, new inspiration, hope, and courage and I am again balanced and proceed on the path of my duty.”

This is the true effect of pictures. Displaying pictures only for the decoration of the house does not fulfill their purpose. Their purpose will be fulfilled only when those pictures are looked at carefully, and useful inspiration and energy can be obtained from them. Needless to say, how will those whose houses have pictures of inferior quality get inspiration for life and upliftment from them? If they get any inspiration and enthusiasm, it will be of cheap and low quality as per the picture.

In order to make the environment of homes conducive and inspiring to make intelligent children, parents take many precautions and steps, but they do not think carefully in the selection of pictures, sculptures, and images. There are many such heroes and gods in Indian culture and history. The house’s atmosphere can be made pure clean, civilized, inspirational, and divine by decorating with their photographs. On the other hand, some people make the house’s atmosphere undesirable by putting semi-nude, obscene, indecent, or pointless pictures of women in their homes. They do not consider its effect on children, women, and themselves. Nowadays, such undesirable images are seen hanging and displayed in shops and on the walls wherever you look. Behind the distortions of today’s obscenity, indecency, decorum, indiscipline, and fashion folly, many people are not vigilant and are inattentive in selecting pictures. To create a great society and nation, we must take great care of our children’s emotional well-being and character building. In order to do this, moral and inspirational pictures must be selected and displayed instead of undesirable or unworthy images.



Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. – Steve Jobs



Karma, Akarma and Vikarma

Na me karmaphale spr̥hā

In the fourteenth śloka of the fourth chapter of Shrimadbhagavadgita, Lord says –

*Na mām karmāṇi limpanti na me karmaphale spr̥hā |
Iti mām yo'bhijānāti karmabhirna sa badhyate || (14/4)*

Meaning: Actions do not implicate me, nor do I desire the fruits of actions. One who knows me thus never gets entangled by the reactions to fruitive actions.

Lord is explaining here that the action proves to be right only when the sentiments behind it are pure. If the inner desire is to satisfy the senses, it will produce more and more mental bonds. Selfless, dedicated actions eradicate the lust. People engaged in such activities get liberated, and their souls get salvation. How can the sentiments of yagya (selflessness) be attached to the actions? Answering this question, Lord says, ‘Do not desire for the fruits of actions.’ He speaks about himself, ‘I do not have any desire for the fruits of actions (*na me karmaphale spr̥hā*).’

When the Sun rises, it illuminates the pond with impure stagnant water as well as the ever-flowing Ganga with sacred water. It is not affected by the impurity of the pond or the sacredness of the river. The source of light, the Sun, always remains aloof and unattached with the illuminated objects. In the same way, pure, infinite consciousness never gets attached to material achievements. The vehicles run smoothly in the night under the light of lamp posts and reach their destinations. However, lamp posts remain unaffected by this movement.

If one can realize that one’s soul is the center of all the activities and is unattached to its outcomes, then remaining centered in the soul and conducting all the activities considering them to be God’s work, one can live a meaningful life. Lord says, ‘one who knows me thus (*Iti mām yo'bhijānāti*), he never gets attached to the bonds of actions (*karmabhirna sa badhyate*).’ How beautiful is the clarification! It is excellent teaching of the art of living. If we wish to realize God, we should imbibe this fact. Then all our activities will be performed with the fervor of yagya.

Pujya Gurudev had been preaching all his life that he wanted to make everyone a Brahman by engaging him in selfless actions. His sadhana was utilized for this very purpose. Who is Brahman? He is the one who is above the bonds of actions and who thinks of God only.

In fact, actions tie one’s personality in the shackles of abandoned passions. New activities generate new desires/passions, thus fastening our freedom



Winning isn’t everything, but wanting to win is. – Vince Lombardi



of thought and action. Then we get entangled in our own web of past deeds. We don't get any opportunity of working freely. Some people are slaves of their addictions. They say, 'I am helpless; I wish to get liberated from it (the addiction) but cannot do so.' The habit of telling lies or speaking foul language, or drinking alcohol is easily formed, but it is really tough to get rid of its slavery.

The knowledge that a being is a soul makes a person detached from actions, and he lives like a witness to his activities. Such knowledge refines his ego. Egoless actions do not give birth to passions. Such divine actions do not tie a person up. Divine actions originate in the soul and can be recognized in the soul's light.

Follow the seekers of truth

Accepting this fact, Lord says in the fifteenth śloka -

Evam jñātvā kṛtaṁ karma pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ |

Kuru karmaiva tasmāttvaṁ pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṁ kṛtaṁ || (15/4)

Meaning: Having known this, the ancient seekers of salvation also performed actions. Therefore, you should also perform actions as did the ancients in days of yore.

Lord had given an example here. He says, 'There should be no confusion about how the action should be performed. Learn from the lives of seekers of the yore, e. g. Janaka, etc., and ancient seers/sages.' Where Lord has said *Evam jñātvā*, He meant, 'Knowing the real Self as a conscious entity within them, ancient seekers performed the actions without any desire for their reward and lived for the benefit of society (*kṛtaṁ karma pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ*). In such a situation, Arjuna does not have to live an artificial life.' Lord is guiding the well-known path followed faithfully by ancient seekers. Arjuna can follow such an exemplary life as led by Bhagirath, Vishwamitra, Shriram, Laxman, Hanumanji, Janaka, or Ashtavakra. We rise above ego and establish identity with Krishna Consciousness when we live such moments. Only such actions get the title of 'actionless karma,' making a person easily lead a purely spiritual life.

Lord has given its detailed explanation in the next two ślokas, which are said to be the axle of Karmayoga. But before this, we will explore the views of Pujya Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya in this regard. He writes in Akhand Jyoti - Hindi magazine (Year 52, issue 7, page 1), 'A human being's life is like an agricultural field in which the seeds of karma (action) are sown, and their good or bad fruits are harvested. A person doing good deeds gets good fruits while the one engaged in vices collects bad results. There is an old saying – one who sows mango seeds will eat mangoes while the one who sows the acacia seeds will reap the thorns. As it is not possible to get mango fruits by sowing the seeds of acacia, in the same way, it is not possible to get good results of bad actions.' This is the right guidance regarding what karmas we should engage in.

Pujya Gurudev himself had done unique experiments in his life. In one of his discourses titled '*Hamne jivan bhar*



Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



boya aur kata’ (I sowed and reaped in my whole life), that is published in the Hindi book titled ‘*Guruvar ki dharohar*,’ he writes – ‘After explaining the method of Gayatri Mahapurashcharanas, my spiritual master said – ‘whatever you possess, you should sow in the field of God; you will get it back hundred times.’ Then, he said – ‘Sow your time and effort in God’s field in the form of society surrounding you. Secondly, utilize all your power of intellect in the work of God. Thirdly, you have emotions. Sow them in the field of God; you will get hundred times in return. Finally, you should also sow all your wealth in God’s field; you will get it back a hundred-fold.’ After that, Pujyavar writes, ‘I did the same, and I am enjoying the benefits of *Riddhis* and *Siddhis* from then onwards.’ This is the principle of Karma that Yogeshwar Krishna explains to Arjuna in

the fifteenth śloka. Now, we move on to two very important ślokas, from where the Lord defines divine karmas and explains that the intricacies of actions are very mysterious. This core of karma’s mystery is the most important part of the philosophy of the Gita.

[To be continued]

[Note: This is the translation of the Hindi version of ‘Yug Gita’ (Part 2) by Dr. Pranav Pandya, published by Shri Vedmata Gayatri Trust, Shantikunj, Haridwar (2011)]

Speaking to an over-enthusiast seeker, Kabir said – ‘Child, remove the rock behind the tree. The disciple immediately removed it. That revealed a hidden path to a cave. As they moved on the path and reached the entrance of the cave, on the door was written – ‘only a person who cuts his ears can enter the cave.’ Kabir cut off both his ears. The door opened, and Kabir entered. The door got closed behind him. When the disciple tried to push the door open, Kabir shouted back, asking him to do the same to gain entrance. The disciple also cut his ears and came in. There was another door inside with a command to cut their nose. Both Kabir and the disciple followed the instruction and went past that door.

At the end of the cave was another door that demanded that they chop their heads off to enter. Saint Kabir promptly offered his head and went inside while the disciple stayed outside. He then experienced a sleep-like trance. After he woke up from that, he saw Kabir coming towards him. He asked him – ‘Revered Guru, I did not understand the import of what transpired just now.’ Kabir said – ‘Child, there is only one secret to understand. If you want to attain self-knowledge and realize God, you have to surrender your ego. Your head symbolizes your ego and the intellect that comes with it. Whatever you experienced in your trance is to make you realize that only a person who can dissolve his ego can become the master of true knowledge.’ The disciple found the basic principle for spiritual progress.



Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage. – Anais Nin



Let Us Revive the Parivrājaka Tradition for Social Upliftment-2

(English version of some excerpts of a discourse continued from the previous issue)

As a member of society, all humans owe some social responsibilities. In order to bear this responsibility, one should be aware of the problems and potentials of the society and try his/her level best, in collaboration with the other like-minded people to eliminate the issues and generate awareness on the progressive use of the potentials for collective progress. For a parivrājaka¹, this becomes an utmost duty. Interestingly, as very lucidly explained by Gurudev in the present part of the discourse, social contact is an excellent and crucial way of learning by experience. Thus in the process of fulfilling his/her social duties, a parivrājaka also gets significant benefits.

Friends,

You may recall that some of our religious customs also teach us the importance of walking on foot. A pilgrimage is truly beatifying only if completed on foot. However, in modern times, except for some dedicated devotees, other pilgrims hardly cover the entire path of a pilgrimage on foot. Nonetheless, a simpler and shorter version of this is still followed in the form of *parikramā*².

In our culture, the religious custom of *parikramā* of holy shrines or pilgrimage on foot is done as a symbol of reverence, also serves the purpose of a healthy exercise. Do you do *parikramā* of the

Govardhan mountain or any temple while sitting in a car/ vehicle, riding on a horse, etc.? I suppose everyone familiar with this practice would certainly respond to this question as “Certainly not!”. You know that doing so will not be a proper *parikramā*. If you have ever done it yourself or have seen people doing a *parikramā*, you must be aware that one walks alongside the periphery of the mountain (or the temple) on foot. In fact, the real way of doing a *parikramā* is to move in *daṇḍotī* posture. Even now, some devout devotees are found doing so at many pilgrimage spots/holy shrines.

What is a *daṇḍotī* posture? As some of you might be aware, it is the posture of doing a *daṇḍwat praṇāma*³. Instead of using the footsteps, one bows down in this posture successively in the forward direction (along the path of *parikramā*); in this case, every new step begins from the position where the forehead had touched the ground in the earlier step. This practice was incorporated in our culture not because of any



If you hear a voice within you say, “you cannot paint,” then, by all means, paint, and that voice will be silenced. – Vincent Van Gogh



emotional overwhelm (as many people regard or practice it today!). In fact, like many other practices and rituals, it had a scientific purpose of a thorough exercise. Every successive step of a *daṇḍotī* posture requires bending and stretching of different parts of the body. It is like a *yogic* exercise for the entire body. Doing a *daṇḍotī parikramā* even for about a kilometer is thus a rigorous physical exercise. (Doing so with devotion naturally keeps the mind focused on the divine object of faith. Thus it is a unique meditative practice that also strengthens emotions and boosts self-confidence.)

Your long walks from one village/place to another, for an altruistic and constructive objective as a *parivrājaka*, will also be like a *parikramā*. It will bestow lots of health benefits upon you. So you see, your social service would also serve your self-interest. It is going to help your self-development in several other ways as well.

Importance of Social Contact:

Your selfless service will also offer you another important benefit in the form of enhanced knowledge and new experience that will go a long way in your self-development. How will this happen? As a *parivrājaka*, you will visit different places, live there for some time (for the project assigned to you/your team), meet and interact with people over there, etc. The new experiences and knowledge you would gain through such visits will help you in many ways. Those of you who have to run your own businesses or require human networking in the profession must be aware of the importance of making social contacts, public relations, etc. People who do not get the opportunity of any social interaction, who remain aloof from others, or those who do not get any practical experience of life beyond their routine domestic affairs, often fail on many fronts of life in spite of having high educational degrees or being good in some creative skill.

For example, look at the status of women in our society in general! Despite having graduation and higher educational degrees or possessing skilled training, many of them remain confined to their homes. By compulsion or choice, they remain so busy as homemakers, decorating their houses, looking after the children, managing the family and the guests, etc., that they just get no experience of life beyond this narrow world. Their social interactions are also limited to close friends in the colony and near-relatives like sisters, sisters-in-law, mother/mother-in-law, aunts, etc. Most of the ladies in their contact are also like them. They often discuss only some routine topics concerning the limited periphery of their family, common friends, cinema and shopping, etc. They just don't know about any subject or people in the external world, beyond their own familiar 'world.'

In spite of being well-educated, many such women do not even know about the basic procedure of money transactions in the banks. Communication with people beyond their comfort zone is also very difficult for most homemakers. They tend to believe in whatever their acquaintances and relatives tell them; they are vulnerable to emotional exploitation by a clever person who is smart in the art of acting, lying, creating an illusion, or playing with words.



Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear. – George Addair



This is why, most often, the fake *Babaji* (fake hermits, or self-styled gurus or god-men), deceptive agents, or burglars in the disguise of salesmen/salesgirls, etc., easily cheat and rob such naïve-minded house-wives. Many of such women suffer badly if destiny takes their husbands away (e.g., due to the latter's professional commitments or death) while their children have still not matured or are not living with them most of the time. It is pathetic to see that in many such cases, even the near relatives misguide or cheat such women. All this happens even to literate or educated women because they just don't have any practical experience dealing with the external world or society.

Not only women, men, too, face fraud and get misled because of lack of substantial exposure/experience. You might have come across people who venture into drastically new fields without any knowledge, experience, or even its basics. Unless they are alert and take necessary precautions against possible risks, they often face failure and repent. For example, someone who has been working in an administrative section of a government office for a long time gets retired. He then receives provident funds, post-retirement benefits, etc. Suppose he puts in all his funds and savings in a business venture without having any prior experience/exposure/

practical knowledge/planning under the guidance of an expert. He does not even contact and discuss with anyone who has experience in that field. Then, naturally, the chances are high that he will face difficulties and lose his capital.

Identifying the right associates and guides for important tasks that are not within your reach is also not easy. You know, society is full of varieties of people. Circumstances of life, too, are not always predictable. So unless you communicate and interact with more and more people, unless you have experienced facing and handling different situations, your bookish knowledge or sharp brain would practically be of no real use on many unfamiliar occasions. Imagine that you go abroad for the first time and reach a place alone; suppose you are a stranger there who has no contact/acquaintance! You have not even bothered to collect practically useful information/guidance. How will you manage? You will most probably have to take some advice from some locals. You will have to reach them, talk to them.

It is the real-life experience of the world that educates you a lot in the 'school' of life. Learning by experience is essential for everyone desirous of progressive and fulfilling life. Communication skills, educational tours, excursions, and field visits are therefore incorporated in most of the progressive schools/colleges/educational institutes for comprehensive learning and training of the students. Visiting different places (with proper planning and preparation), meeting and interacting with local people are very useful in this regard in the later ages as well. Without this, one, in spite of having excellent bookish knowledge, often lives like a 'frog in the well,' who knows nothing of the outer world beyond his narrow periphery and cannot do anything other than his routine job. Such people rust their potentials and are often failures on most fronts of life even if they have earned substantial wealth through their normal job.



We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light. – Plato



So you see, a high academic/professional degree would not be of much use in reality unless one also has practical experience of life. Very often, especially in the industries and business, the average-level students with practical skills and experience do far better than their top-ranking former classmates. Today, public relations and human networking also seem to have become necessary for progress in many other fronts of life. In fact, as most of you might agree, social contacts are also essential for adults as part of their personal and familial responsibilities.

You can get a lot of opportunities to gain practical experience by being socially aware and responsible, participating in the events of social relevance and meeting and discussing with people, etc., as a dedicated *parivrājaka* in our mission's projects of mass-awakening and social upliftment. Remember that travel (on foot) and social interaction (with the locals) is necessary and useful not only as part of your work as a *parivrājaka*, it is very important for your personal growth as well as offers you new and practically useful experiences in life.

Notes:

- 1a. **Parivrājaka:** In the truest sense of the word, *parivrājakas* are supposed to be spiritually enlightened, cultured people who would disseminate (with practical guidance), the knowledge they acquired from the teachings of saints/sages/yogis and self-experience for the enlightened welfare of the masses. They are supposed to live a nomadic life like hermits and contribute to the improvement and all-round development of the people they would meet and interact with at different places.
- 1b. **Revival of the Parivrājaka Tradition:** Gurudev, Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya, had pioneered the revival of the ancient Indian culture in the present times in a prudent and practical way for the virtuous awakening, holistic development, and righteous progress of humankind and wellbeing of the entire world. As part of this, he had also

initiated the resurrection of the *parivrājaka* tradition for mass-awakening, social reformation, and constructive service-oriented grass-root projects of relevance for the collective progress of the Indian society today. As part of this initiative, Gayatri Pariwar volunteers, who are *sadhakas* inclined towards selfless service of the society, are in good mental and physical health and are free from personal responsibilities or can devote time for social service for some time (e.g., few months in a year) without affecting their familial duties and other commitments, are trained as *Parivrājakas* at Shantikunj, Haridwar. [For details contact concerned department at www.awgp.org]

2. **Parikramā:** The action or ritual of walking clockwise around an object of reverence (such as a holy shrine) with holy chants or prayers in the mind. It symbolizes continuation of devotional endeavors.
3. **Dandwat Praṇāma:** Prostration. The verb prostrate means — to lay flat and straight on the ground so that the forehead bows down and touches the earth/floor/ground surface (or the feet of the deity being worshiped in the shrine). The posture indicates an expression of devout respect and complete surrender.

(To be continued in the next issue)



Fall seven times and stand up eight. – Japanese Proverb



Live Life Your Way

In his travelogue, 'Pictures from Italy,' Charles Dickens writes about three women keen to leave Italy, move to a new country, and start their lives anew. They wished to go to a warm tropical country but were bound by their religious upbringing, blind traditions, and past, preventing them from living their desired lives. They always wanted to go out but could not. Their inability to go was primarily because of their affinity to their present surroundings.

Are you also experiencing a similar emotional dilemma? Do you feel tied down by your past choices? Do you feel chains of bondage ensnaring you with things, places, and thoughts from the past? Are you leading a life of freedom and creativity? Have you become inert and complacent by living a life with past resources, activities, and knowledge?

Literally speaking, none of our past experiences are lost. They remain in some corner of our subconscious mind. These experiences continue to influence our day-to-day activities in some way or another. In the presence of suitable conditions, like in dreams, the latent

memories from the past get stirred and surface to the conscious mind. So, we can never be truly free from our past life and its experiences. Such is the wonderful mechanism of our brain.

Continuously living amid past bittersweet experiences, letting the present life shroud in those shadows is not good for either mental or moral health. Our development, maturity, and mental balance will remain stable only when we forget and move past our previous mistakes, troubles, and foolish actions. We must disregard our previous failures and weaknesses and start life anew.

A young wife spoke to her husband, who had just returned from the battlefield, "Dear, I know that your battalion would have been the best in the army. You and your comrades would have fought bravely. But now, you have come home to lead the life of a peaceful citizen. You should forget the pain, agony, troubles, and suffering from the battlefield. Whatever has happened, it is done and dusted. It is dead and a thing of the past. What then is the point in continuing to be attached to a life that is long gone?" Hearing this, the mentally fatigued husband was angered, and he snapped back. But the advice that the wife gave to forget the past and start the new life of a normal citizen with a new set of friends and acquaintances, new zeal, and mindset was perfect in terms of psychological advice.

It is very important for war veterans or refugees who suffered immense mental agony, troubles, and atrocities during partition to dissociate themselves from the past experiences and turn a new leaf. They must forget the failures of the past to move forward in life.



When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be. – Lao Tzu



Constantly thinking of the past happy memories or the places we enjoyed will only disturb the present life. We will lose the present while basking in the glory of the past. It will be best to realize that the present moments are precious, and our objective should be to utilize them to the fullest. What use is there in ruminating about the arrows that have already left the bowstring?

An elderly married couple was always thinking of the wonderful time they spent together during their early days of marriage. They constantly missed that intimacy and love. While it might be true that they had a great time, what use is it if those memories are making their present life unbearable? Wouldn't it be better if the couple focused on the bliss they are now experiencing in their evolved relationship that has turned into a mature friendship filled with deep love and a life of supporting each other through thick and thin? This could fill their present life with happiness. They should enjoy the opportunities that the present life is providing them to appreciate their relationship.

It is best for our mental health to forget the past failures because they fill us with guilt and loss of self-esteem that will do nothing other than lead us to neurological debility. The hard feelings you have nurtured in your mind against those who have wronged you or you have been jealous about, or you have been angry about, try to let go of those emotions. Instead, establish a new bond and relationship with those people. The new relationship will certainly be pleasant if you reach out to them with good intentions.

You might have made mistakes knowingly or unknowingly in the past. What use is it to deliberate on them now? They will do nothing other than sap your mental energies, and impair your creativity and productivity. If you are really upset about some mistakes you committed in the past, learn from them, and move forward.

Do you remember the wonderful words spoken by Jesus Christ while giving the mantra for a sinner to atone his actions? He had said, 'Enter into the realm of peace and resolve that you will never again do this mistake in the future.' Bury your pains, troubles, and failures and start afresh.

It is not difficult to start a new life. Make some changes like redecorating your room, revamping your wardrobe, buying inspiring books, watching new programs, choosing a new diet or cuisine, and building a distinct ambiance for yourself. All these will help cut the ties with the past and create a variety and sense of adventure in life. Every day leads you towards fulfillment and prosperity, hope, and enthusiasm. Imagine that happiness and comforts are in store for you. Why then should the past torment you?

Consider life to be a journey. While there are thorny shrubs and prickly pebbles, there are also gentle breezes and flowery gardens filled with fragrance and music. Look forward to happiness, illumination, fame, and prosperity. Consider them your close acquaintances and travel towards them. There is no point in ruminating over the unpleasant experiences of the past. Let those not hinder the amazing opportunities that are coming your way today. Lead a life with renewed zeal and enthusiasm every day.



Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take but by the moments that take our breath away. – Maya Angelou



The Scientific Aspect of Gayatri Mantra

The vibrations of *Vedic Mantras* carry immense energy that is amplified by the *prāṇa* (vital spiritual energy) and bioelectricity of the body and the sublime currents of spiritually refined thoughts and sentiments of the *sādhaka(s)*. The practice of *japa-sādhana* of *Gāyatrī Mantra* is given supreme importance in this context, as the majestic power of this eternal *mantra* is expanding perpetually, as the *sādhana* of this *mantra* has been constantly practiced by millions of spiritual experts since the Vedic Age. This *mantra* is also special in its unique sonic pattern, the sublime flow of *Śabda*, and astonishing physical, psychological, and spiritual impacts.

From a scientific point of view, one may explain it as follows. As the continuous movement of the motor in a dynamo generates electricity, the *japa* or the cyclic repetition of a *mantra* at a constant pace also gives rise to the circular motion of the sonic manifestation of *Śabda* (eternal element of cosmic sound – evolutionary vibration) hence to a centrifugal sonic force and otherwise latent power of sound. One who knows

the *Mantra Vidyā* indeed knows the secrets of the optimal generation and use of this cycle of energy, which is a unique source of physical, mental, and spiritual potentials.

The coexistence of the forces of attraction and the circular motions of the planets must be well-known to the students of Physics. Because of the fast movements in the charged fields of attraction, each planet also produces a roaring sound of intensity proportional to its huge size. The superimposition of these planetary roars gives rise to the *cosmic sound* – a manifestation of *Śabda*, which the scientists consider as the major source of power for every kind of ‘natural motion’ existing in the entire universe.

The power of *Śabda* manifests itself in multiple ways in the *sādhana* of the great *Gāyatrī Mantra*. This *mantra* is a compilation of twenty-four special syllables (in Sanskrit), which are so configured that the pronunciation of each gives rise to unique vibrations at one or more of the twenty-four important bio-electrical extrasensory energy nuclei in the *sādhaka's* body. The collective compounded sonic effects of all of these are so unique and immense that these activate the subtle body too.

The literal meaning of this *mantra* is a universal prayer for the divine illumination of the intellect of all to lead the world towards the righteous path. The *sādhaka's* mental concentration and pure sentiments are naturally focused around this meaning (and the associated feelings and inspirations) when he performs the *japa* of this *mantra* through emotional depths. This has two prominent effects – viz., the *sādhaka's* mind achieves a higher state of meditation and also attains spiritual refinement of the inner domains of the mind.



Happiness is not something readymade. It comes from your own actions. – Dalai Lama



The sonic, as well as the emotional energy together, make a *mantra* alive. Therefore, for the success of the *sādhana* of any *mantra*, it is the purity of character and deeds, the strength and stability of mind and the *śraddhā* – that are the most crucial virtues of the *sādhaka* rather than his worldly success, talents, intellectual eminence or academic expertise, etc.

The *thought waves* continuously generated from the mind are analogous to electromagnetic waves. If we throw a stone in a pond, it will produce certain currents of water, which will flow transversely up to the banks of the pond. The universe also is a kind of ‘a gigantic pond without boundaries’ and hence an infinite open ‘spherical set’ in a hypergeometric sense. The electromagnetic currents produced by our thoughts and emotions are expanded in the limitless domain of this etheric ocean. And, because of the endless (hence circular) ‘periphery’ of the latter, these waves reach back to their point of origin (i.e., our mind, in this case) upon completing a cycle.

The simple principle behind our speech or the pronunciation of a word by our mouth is that – the vibrations of air with specific (as per the movement of the associated components of the mouth) portions of the nervous system produces specific vibrations in the vocal cord. The mind completely regulates this physiological process. The unconscious mind guides the controlling machinery of the brain and hence governs the movements of the components that ‘directly’ participate in the process of speaking or singing, etc. The instantaneous difference in our voice and pattern of pronunciation of the same word under different moods (mental states) clearly demonstrates this remarkable harmony between the speech-system and the mind.

If we casually pat somebody’s back, there would be no reaction in general. However, if we do so intentionally or say in an angry mood, it would naturally hurt that person

and may invite repelling action from his side. This simple example illustrates the difference between the effects of a mere physical activity and that of an action associated with unusual mental force. This difference in effects exists because the former involves only the static electricity of the body and routine auto-regulation of the brain, whereas the latter bears the special ‘electrified charge’ of the vital spiritual power of the mind too. The words recited by a person with full mental concentration are indeed energized by the bio-electrical energy of the physical body as well as the electromagnetic and subliminal *prāṇic* force of his mind.

Because of their immense sublimated energy, the vibrations generated by focused (meditative) mental recitations of the Vedic *mantras* practiced by the *ṛishis* and the currents of the thought waves of these spiritually refined angelic personalities exist in the supernormal cosmic energy-fields since yore. In their circular journey (cycles), the *sādhaka*’s thought waves and the sound waves generated by his *mantra-japa* are also empowered by these cosmic fields. Thus, while reaching back to their origin, these waves help enhance the spirituality and the overall physical and mental energies of the *sādhaka*.



A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. - Winston S. Churchill





The Indian Postal Department inaugurated a new branch of the Post Office at DSVV, Haridwar.



Glimpses of Vasant Parva celebrations at Yug Teerth, Shantikunj, Haridwar



Dr. Chinmay Pandya (inset - right) and Sri Mahendra Sharma (inset - left) guided the youth volunteers of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar states at the Youth Convention organized at Shantikunj, Haridwar by AWGP.

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